

BiWomen

The Newsletter of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network



Annie Goglia and two of her guys at the 1999 Boston AIDS Walk.

BI WOMEN WRITE ABOUT MEN

Me and My Guys

By Annie Goglia

Looking at photos of my sixth birthday party, I noticed I had equal numbers of boys and girls as friends. That seemed right to me. But little by little, the boys and I grew apart. It was hard on me when my best male friend decided at age eight that it was no longer OK to have a girl as a friend. I was confused and hurt. Why did my being a girl have to matter? At age eight I made a new male friend, but he moved away the next year. It took many years before I had close male friends again. As I reached adolescence in a heterosexually oriented world, I often thought that if I liked a boy, it meant I wanted to be his girlfriend. This made getting close with guys almost impossible for me as a shy insecure teenager. By the end of high school I hadn't dated (with the exception of one unfortunate experience in eighth grade), but I did have several guy friends who I mostly socialized with at school.

In my twenties, I had five or six close women friends who I spent a lot of time with in person and on the phone. I might have had two or three close men friends, but women were usually the core of my social life. This was despite the fact I was living a predominantly heterosexual life. I knew I was bi,

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Gentlemen

By [REDACTED]

I live with two men – one from Beijing, one from New York City. Most mornings, I open my squeaky bedroom door and enter the warm kitchen to be greeted by at least one of them with a sincere "Good morning" and a smile.

I work with three men as my business partners. They offer me the plush green chair at meetings in our main (home) Back Bay office, and do not allow me to decline it, yet treat me equally in all other ways.

At the Kendall Square software company where I worked for a year, my male co-workers were my main opponents in the pool room, and even went so far as to call pockets by adding "please" to the statement.

Maybe I am just a Southern belle at heart. Raised in the Virginia outskirts of Washington, D.C., with family roots going back in the same state over 300 years, I swoon at the sight of a gentleman. But my definition of gentleman doesn't include expectations that a woman remain in the kitchen and all that. Instead, he is someone who values a woman for all she is: different from a man,

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Robyn Ochs
Elle Thomas

Carol Gebert

Mary

Jessica

Kira

Aly

Jane Kaplan

Debbie Block-
Schwenk

Kevin Block-
Schwenk



*And many more
wonderful
women! You
know who you
are! Thank you,
thank you, thank
you!*

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Ellyn Ruthstrom

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Dear Readers,

Happy New Year and Pseudo-Millennium! I hesitate to draw attention to our glitch in the last BiWomen — many people swear to me they didn't even notice — but our printer accidentally printed several pages out of order. But it wasn't a Y2K bug, just a run of the mill human error.

With all the millennium talk going around, it seems like a fitting time to think ahead to where our movement is headed. Sunday, April 30, hundreds of thousands of queer people and our allies will meet in Washington, D.C. for another national march to continue the struggle for queer civil rights. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," marriage rights, child custody rights, presidential politics, anti-racism, sexuality education, transgender rights, AIDS funding, and many more issues will be on the agenda as people converge from all over the country.

If you have not yet attended a national queer march, try to be there for this one. In 1993, I drove from Ohio with a carful of fellow grad students to be there. I lived in D.C. in the early eighties before I was out, and being there as an out bi woman ten years later among a million queers was an amazing experience. The Mall and the surrounding area was Safe Queer Space. Smiling, singing, scoping queers were streaming out of the Metro stops, filling the restaurants and bars and cafes, and creating an energy that sizzled through the crowd. It's an unforgettable feeling to see our community's diversity, creativity, and joy of life. I am sure that members of BBWN will be attending so contact us if you are interested in marching with us. Check out the march website for more details: www.mmow.org.

There will also be a half-day conference on bisexual activism sponsored by Bisexual Insurgence, a D.C. bi group, on Saturday, April 29. Sign up at www.onelist.com/community/biconf to receive updates about the conference.

A big thanks to all BBWN supporters who made donations at the BBWN Holiday House Party and for those who came to the January Video Night. (We took in \$90 that night!) Check out the calendar for more upcoming outings.

Ellyn Ruthstrom

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

Next in Bi Women:

The BiWomen theme for
April/May is:

Femme/Butch

Do you identify as femme or as butch? Both? Neither? What does that mean to you? What turns you on about a high femme, a leather butch? Do you react against these labels? How does femme/butch play out in bi communities? How does it play out in your bed?

DEADLINE: March 13, 2000

Future Issues in 2000

June/July:

The Politics Issue: Bi Space

August/September:

Body Image



Please Submit to BiWomen!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to eruthstr@mail.lesley.edu.

*If you do not want your name published,
please tell us.*

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this newsletter are copyrighted
by the authors and artists.



Celebrants at the Fourth Annual BBWN Holiday House Party in December. Generous attendees donated @\$400.

Bi Married Women's Group Ends

Dear Boston Bi Women,

After several years of meeting monthly, the bi married women's group will no longer be meeting on a regular basis. Unfortunately, I no longer have the time to facilitate it or put forth the effort to advertise for new members, and no one has stepped forward to become the new facilitator. Anyone interested in taking up the reins of the group or just talking about being with a man can feel free to email me at starfurry@att.net or call me at 617-782-2754.

Debbie Block-Schwenk

Editor's Note: A huge warm thanks to Debbie for all the energy she has given the married women's group over the years. It's been a great source of support for those who have needed it.

1999 BBWN Financial Statement

Submitted by Robyn Ochs

Balance forward 1/1/99:	\$ 3,050.82
Expenses	
Printing	2,017.67
Postal fees & postage	972.99
Merchandise purchased (buttons for sale)	2,072.50
Event expenses	317.67
Supplies	180.00
Advertising	50.00
Misc. (gift for outgoing editor)	67.14
Total expenses:	5,677.92
Income	
Dues	2,335.00
Advertising	80.00
Merchandise	875.04
Bank Interest	24.06
Donations	210.00
Event income	637.00
Total income:	4,160.10
Balance as of 12/31/99	\$1,534.00

Treasurer's comments: Early this year a one-time opportunity arose to purchase 5000 buttons at what is essentially half of the normal wholesale price. After much thought, I decided to purchase this merchandise, despite its strong short-term negative impact on our bank balance because over time this outlay of \$1470.50 should yield approximately three times that amount for BBWN. I believe strongly in the positive value of symbols, and we have been selling buttons through the BRC web site (www.biresource.org), at Pride events, and I have been selling buttons

for BBWN at almost all of my speaking engagements. However, the short-term effect of my decision is a dramatic drop in our bank balance.

This would be a good time to make a donation to BBWN to support the newsletter and the work we are doing. Remember we send *Bi Women* to lots of campus and community organizations for free and leave complimentary copies of the newsletter at the Women's Center and at New Words Bookstore. These forms of outreach cost us money. Checks can be sent to BBWN, or if you wish your donation to be tax-deductible, you may channel it through our parent organization, BRC (P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140). Be sure to put "For BBWN" on the comment line. ▼

Friends of Lesbian Mother Seek Support for Her

Boston-based *Bay Windows*, a weekly queer newspaper, recently honored E.O. as their 1999 Person of the Year. E.O. is the lesbian mother who won a ruling by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to be considered a "de facto" parent of her son. (She is referred to only as E.O. to protect the identity of her son.) It is a very important precedent and makes Massachusetts only the second state in the country, after Wisconsin, to award a queer parent the legal standing to seek custody of their non-biological children.

It has been a long fight for E.O. to get this ruling, which only grants temporary visitation, and she will continue to fight the system in order to establish a permanent place for herself in her son's life. Due to the high cost of her legal fees, her friends have set up a trust fund to help her. Donations may be sent to: A Mother's Love Trust, P.O. Box 44-1625, Somerville, MA 02144-0014. Or email for more info: motherslove@hotmail.com. ▼

Faster Pussycats

Did you have an electrifying encounter with a precocious go-go-dancer who went and went and went? How about a down 'n dirty liaison with a hot stripper? Do you regularly venture into lesbian steam rooms, saunas, or bath houses? Alyson Publications is currently accepting erotic real-life accounts for the anthology *Faster Pussycats: True-life Tales from Lesbian Sex, Strip, and Dance Clubs*, edited by renowned club girl Trixi. Stories with strong and creative plot lines, good dialogue, interesting settings, and hot, hot sex will be given first consideration. Deadline: March 1, 2000. Write for guidelines or send manuscripts to: Faster Pussycats, c/o Tammy Stoner, 6922 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90028.

Guys from page 1

but wasn't in a good place geographically, or perhaps emotionally, to act on my attractions to women. During that time most of my relationships with men were sexual friendships rather than more traditional romances. I did have one live-in boyfriend, but you'd hardly call our relationship conventional. He loved to wear skirts and before we met, briefly called himself a male lesbian. He did love cuddling, tofu, flannel shirts, and comfortable footwear!

I knew I needed a change from small city life. I turned thirty, moved to Boston, came way further out, and found a bi/queer community at last. Boston seemed to have lots of guys, and I ended up having lots of guy friends, and fewer women friends. I started to wonder if there isn't something that gets in the way of many straight, bi women and even some lesbians from being close with each other after a certain age. My best thinking is that as sexism is a challenge in getting close with men, the internalized sexism is a challenge with women. I sometimes unconsciously slip into not valuing women as highly and judge them more critically than men. So in the past year or two, I made a decision to make more women friends and appreciate the ones I already have. It's worked, and I've been reaching a good balance.

But back to men. Having men in my life who are friends but not lovers has been a good experience for me. Having better boundaries has helped me get closer to people in general, but especially men. My guy friends are great. I have three men in my life now who I consider to be close friends. I can safely say none of them fit the stereotype of a macho guy. We talk about what's important to us as well as share the minor details of everyday life: art, nature, cooking, our social lives, work, spirituality. We play together, work together, and support one another. One is a gay man I have known for almost ten years and who I lived in group houses with for five of those years. One is a bisexual man who I've known for eleven years; he is an "ex" (we broke up six years ago). He moved to

California two years ago, but we talk on the phone several times a week. The third, a straight but not narrow man, is a current housemate who I've known for a year and a half. I am about to go on a vacation to California with my gay friend, and we will visit my bi guy friend while we're there. They form part of my intentional family of friends for life.

As a small child, I was really smart about my friendships without having to think about it. I just knew how to get close to both boys and girls. Our society does not usually encourage closeness outside of family ties and romantic relationships. When people see me being close and affectionate with a guy friend, they assume we're a couple. If I have the chance, I let people know we are significant friends, not a romantic couple. As an adult, I have consciously and thoughtfully reclaimed my right to be close to men and women. It was great fun as a little girl: and it still is! ▽

Browser Beat: By Elle Thomas

<http://www.ladyslipper.org/>

Interested in expanding your CD collection of great female artists beyond Melissa and Ani? Ladyslipper is a non-profit organization meant to heighten public awareness of the achievements of female artists and musicians. Search by genre or name, listen to audio samples, order recordings on-line.

Gentlemen from page 1

separate from a man, yet equal to a man in her deserving of respect for her intellect and her intuition, as well as for her smile, her grace, and her sensuality. This respect prevails in both the professional and personal realms.

Therefore, I appreciate many men who are in my life. However, I have preferred to date only women over the past two years, as I find that I share an emotional intimacy with women that eludes my relationships with my "gentlemen", both in friendships and in dating. An intimacy that I crave at my core, that male company just hasn't provided thus far in my life.

So, for my future, I idealistically envision having a man, with the genteel qualities I adore, as my life partner, while maintaining intimacy, at least emotionally, with the women I treasure. Alternately, I see a woman as my life partner, while keeping company with men I admire for their firm upholding of some traditions, yet who have dismissed other ones in favor of more progressive ways. Perhaps the former image is more easily found, but I hope I can be happy in either situation. ▽

La Red para Lesbianas y Mujeres Bisexuales Maltratadas
The Network for Battered Lesbians and Bisexual Women

617.423.7233 (V/TTY)
Linea de Crisis
Grupo de Apoyo
Refugio de Emergencia

617.423.SAFE (V/TTY)
Hotline
Support Group
Emergency Shelter

Todos los servicios son gratis y confidenciales.



All services are free and confidential.

Resplendent Refuge

By Elle Thomas

your back
stomach
hips
chest,
one august mahogany trunk
adroitly carved to a curved balsa form,
the wood warmed
by a skylight's summer beam

your downy hair,
straw joyfully askew,
tempting tugs from my fingers

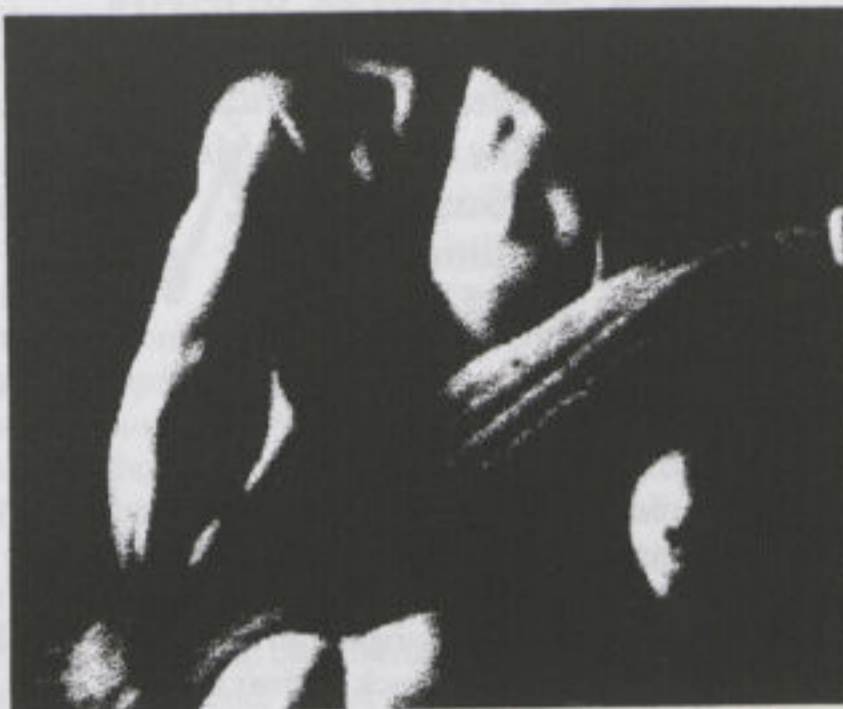
your forearms,
sinewy tendons and robust veins,
victuals for my springtide hunger

your thumb,
as wide as my largest toe,
a tactile comple(i)ment to my clitoris

your fingers channel your body's brawn
one
thrusts to my depth
three
swell my canal

your penis
a burnished shaft, naturally harbored from attrition,
the head buffs me
like a favourite chamois shirt
nuzzles my breast

your soft soulful sighs
each a string of Christmas lights,
steady white bulbs sheathed by refracting cups,
at once familiar and exciting
warm and welcoming
liked mulled apple cider
at midnight
on a snowbound winter's eve



Zaftig: Well-Rounded Erotica

A new anthology by women of all sizes and shapes is looking for submissions. Edited by Hanne Blank, author of *Big Big Love: A Sourcebook on Sex for People of Size and Those Who Love Them* (Greenery Press, February 2000), and associate editor of *Scarlet Letters*, this groundbreaking anthology seeks stories that will show the world just how sexy it is to live and love in real, round bodies. Looking for hot, well-crafted fiction that explores the joys, vicissitudes, triumphs, terrors, and torrid teasing titillations of making love with, to, and in bodies that aren't what society sees as "perfect" -- but that are perfectly sexy in all sizes of large. Queer, straight, bi, trans, kinky, vanilla, polyamorous, monogamous, are all OK. The important things are that it be affirming of body size diversity, that it have at least one character who is identified as being larger than slender/thin 'average' weight, and that it be sexy as hell. Guidelines are available at <http://www.hanne.net/anthology>. This anthology is open to women and female-identified trans/intergendered writers only. Deadline is April 15, 2000. E-mail: wellrounded@hanne.net.

Both Sides Now Bisexual Group of Vermont

Both Sides Now is a discussion and social group for bisexual men and women in Vermont that wants to support people in being open and alive in their bisexuality. Their goal is also to serve as a link to other bisexual resources in Vermont, Montreal (Canada), and the Internet. They now have a monthly gathering place to meet and to discuss issues and ideas and have started a listserv on the Internet for folks to share information, introductions, and resources. By adding this electronic communication, Both Sides Now hopes to inspire bisexuals all over Vermont and nearby areas to communicate and come together. To join the new discussion listserv, go to <http://www.onelist.com/community/BothSidesNowVT>, or e-mail the group at obladida@together.net.



Book Review: *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, by Susan Faludi, William Morrow and Co. 1999

Reviewed by Lynn Rosenbaum

As a feminist activist, I am very appreciative of the gains for women produced by the feminist movement. But these changes can only go so far as long as men are still stuck in their traditional roles, or are hovering between the old roles and some as-yet-undefined new roles. I think it's important that feminists examine men's changing roles in society, and author Susan Faludi has done just that in *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*.

The book reviews that I read of *Stiffed* were disappointingly vague and superficial, focusing on the types of men Faludi chose to interview (unemployed ship builders, laid off aerospace engineers, teen gang members, Promise Keepers, football fans) without much discussion of Faludi's analysis. This inspired me to start plowing through the 600-page book. I confess that I've only reached page 239 so far, but I thought I'd summarize a small piece of Faludi's analysis as food for thought, followed by my own response. Please keep in mind that this is only one tiny morsel, which in no way does justice to the depth of Faludi's arguments. Her analysis is sophisticated and really does take hundreds of pages to articulate.

One group of males that Faludi interviews is cadets at the Citadel military academy. One aspect of cadet life which Faludi describes is the brutal hazing of each other through torturous exercise, violent beatings, and verbal abuse. An athlete has his head dunked in water twenty times until he passes out; a cadet jumps on the head of another cadet lying face down, then leaves him there in a pool of blood. The list goes on and on.

But she also documents an environment that encourages the male cadets to nurture one another in a "mother-child" type of relationship. The men help each other doing traditionally feminine tasks such as pressing clothes, polishing shoes, and helping each other get dressed. In order to do a proper "shirt tuck," one cadet

must help another by putting his hands around the other's waist and completing the tuck. They cry, hug, and kiss one another. They develop a sense of camaraderie standing naked together in the communal shower.

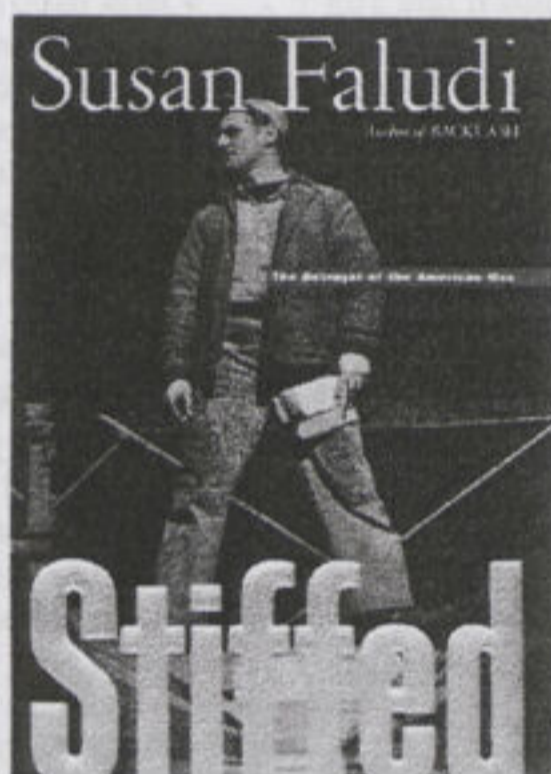
Though these two extremes of behavior seem contradictory, Faludi theorizes that the violence is a way to conceal the forays into "feminine" behavior. Indeed, the worst insults the men can hurl at one another are "pussy," "fucking little girl," and a menstruating woman — anything which equates the man with being like a woman. The men are astutely aware that their nurturing behavior does not meet traditional standards of manliness, and must go to great lengths to squash it down. They feel extremely shameful about it. Violence is one way to lessen the intensity of the shame. In committing violent acts, the men can create feelings of pride and exude a tough armored exterior to hide the shame underneath.

Another way to avoid shame is to protect their privacy. Faludi believes that American culture has transformed men's roles from "utilitarian" (providing a useful civic function) to the less fulfilling "ornamental" being all about individual display and glamour. She argues that the protected male environment of the Citadel provides the cadets with "group anonymity and utilitarian security within which men could permit themselves to nurture..." (p. 151)

One way that they try to maintain this environment is by vigorously turning away women from the academy. Faludi's research takes place in 1994 when Shannon Faulkner is attempting to fight her way in as the first female cadet. There is tremendous resistance from the cadets to admitting females. They brutalize and humiliate Faulkner, much as they do each other, but without any accompanying acceptance. Later, as more women enter, they set a female cadet on fire.

What would inspire such brutality? According to Faludi, the cadets feel that a woman's gaze enforces society's ridicule of men who exhibit feminine behavior. The men's violent resistance is against not just the women who want to enter, but against the gaze of a culture which has denied them a legitimate way of experiencing nurturance and intimacy.

Thus, Faludi concludes, the men are playing out a "gender battle" of sorts in which the men play both parts. "What was at its best, a strategy for replicating a mother-child relationship in masculine terms out of view of female



inspection was becoming, at its worst, a sado-masochistic relationship in which what was "feminine" had to be brutally crushed." (p. 145)

Faludi seeks out another group of men who find a different way to express their "feminine" side. She talks to some local gay drag queens. The drag queens have carved out their own niche for expressing their femininity. They get to dress up and primp and preen and strut around on stage. And in an interesting twist, they reveal that despite the homophobic atmosphere at the Citadel (insults of being a "fag" are right up there with being a woman) most of them have dated Citadel cadets.

The drag queens seem to have found a way to enact their feminine sides, but as Faludi astutely points out, "The drag queens could act like mother hens or pinup models only by dressing us as women, jumping the gender divide. This was hardly a solution for the average man, straight or gay... The drag queens could pull it off only by pretending that they were female." (p. 150) That is, there are still few arenas in which man can be "feminine" as men.

In response to Faludi's findings, I want to raise two questions. First, as feminists, how can we restore value to that which has been dubbed "feminine"? Clearly, the "feminine," whether it is exhibited by females or males, is still degraded in our patriarchal culture. The spheres of nurturance, intimacy, housekeeping, and beautifying ourselves all have their place in a well-rounded society. Restoring a sense of worth to these pursuits, without reducing them to flat stereotypes or commodified, glamorized obsessions, can benefit both women and men.

A second question is, as bisexuals, what potential do we have to create a space for men in particular to act out the "feminine" parts of their lives? There are some opportunities in gay settings for men to be more "feminine," but as with the drag queens, the opportunities may take place in distinctly separate spaces which don't allow men to carry over their behavior into their everyday work and family lives. I wonder if bisexuals don't have a unique potential to transcend some of the right gender boundaries of our culture. We have already refused to be locked into the "straight box" or the "gay box," preferring a more fluid interpretation of sexual preference. Similarly our gender roles may shift, depending on whether we are involved with a man or a woman (or with both or with neither). I think that this fluidity is the key to opening up the boxes and allowing both men and women the freedom to be fully human. ▽

Check out BBWN on our website at:
davidr.ne.mediaone.net/biresource/bbwn

Happy Birthday to Me!

By Laurie Bishop

Wow, look at that one!" My straight friend is pointing at a large bald woman decked out in baggy jeans, a sports bra, and rainbow accessories from head to toe. Dyke-spotting at an Ani DiFranco concert, surprise, surprise. When we enter the auditorium I'm hot with a massive swelling of estrogen, not only hundreds of women but hundreds of lesbians. Hundreds of girls holding hands, hugging, even making out in public.

I'm beginning to feel a little left out. My girlfriend, Anna, gives me a curt smile as if to say, "Don't hold your breath, Laurie." I had come to terms with her very closeted status but never stopped trying to grab her hand in public from time to time. However, tonight is supposed to be special. The concert is a birthday present from Anna and I'm in no mood to deal with any rejection. We spend most of the show dancing mildly close to one another in a group. I might have been able to touch her if I took a few steps closer and caught her by surprise.

About halfway through the show, Ani breaks into "Light of Some Kind," a song about her finding love with a girl, one that Anna and I know every word to. I feel a tap on my shoulder and turn to be met with a long kiss right on the lips, "Happy Birthday." And she dances with me — close to me — for the rest of the night. ▽

Survey on Woman-to-Woman Relationship Violence

Lori Girshick is a sociology / women's studies professor who is looking for bisexual women to respond to her survey on relationship violence. Contact Dr. Girshick at lgirshic@warren-wilson.edu or 828-298-3325, ext 376 or visit her website at www.warren-wilson.edu/~lgirshic. ▽

Start the new year by exploring your spiritual roots...join us at "Telling Your Spiritual Journey," a workshop led by Annie Goglia professional storyteller.

The workshop will be held on a Sunday in February, time to be determined. New Words Bookstore, Inman Square, Cambridge. Limited to 8. Pre-registration required, \$35 - \$60 (sliding scale).

Call Annie at 781-646-2379 or email her at kalamari@juno.com for all details. 1/2 fee deposit required.

New Hampshire Pride Dance

The second annual Seacoast NH Pride Fundraising Dance is February 19, 2000, from 7 p.m. til midnight at the Connie Bean Community Center, 135 Daniel St. in Portsmouth. The dance is sponsored by Out & About, Seacoast Gay Men, and the Dover Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgendered Support Group. Music is donated by "Abound With Sounds" Disc Jockey and Karaoke Services, featuring out-gay DJ Rick Tate. Tickets for the fundraiser, which are limited to 300, are \$6.00 in advance and \$8.00 at the door. For tickets or further information, log on to the dance committee's web page: <http://pridedance.cjb.net>.

Early Embraces III

Lindsey Elder is soliciting submissions for Early Embraces III, third in a series of collections of true, first-person stories by women describing their first sexual encounter with another woman. Please include details about what year it took place, how old you both were, what happened, and did anything develop from the experience? Submission deadline: June 1, 2000. Your name, address, phone number, and E-mail address (if applicable) should all appear on first page. Must be nonfiction but should read like a compelling piece of hot erotic fiction. If your submission has been previously published, make sure you have authority to grant us reprint rights. Include SASE with sufficient postage to return manuscript. If manuscript is disposable, please state so in cover letter. Send manuscripts to: Early Embraces III, c/o Alyson Publications, 6922 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90028.



Movie Reviews:

The Talented Mr. Ripley, Being John Malkovich, and American Beauty

Reviewed by Debbie Block-Schwenk

Celebrity, Identity, and Desire

Editor's Warning: Some details of the plot of "The Talented Mr. Ripley" are revealed in this review that you may prefer not to know before seeing the film.

Three of this season's most acclaimed movies, "The Talented Mr. Ripley," "Being John Malkovich," and "American Beauty," deal with questions of identity in a world that increasingly values only fame and wealth and I doubt this is a coincidence. If we are in the midst of an identity crisis — both individually and collectively — is it internal based on our own insecurities, or is it a product of an increasingly relentless entertainment and media industry trying to hook us with the next big thing? And how should we respond?

"The Talented Mr. Ripley," directed by Anthony Minghella and adapted from a novel by closeted lesbian Patricia Highsmith, takes place in the late 1950's and follows Tom Ripley in his unrequited desire for shipping heir Dickie Greenleaf and for Dickie's self-indulgent lifestyle. Played with just the right touch of awkwardness and carefully constructed ambiguity by Matt Damon, Ripley is asked by the senior Greenleaf to go to Italy and retrieve his son. Who could resist an all-expenses paid trip to Italy? Ripley prepares carefully for his part, memorizing the jazz songs and artists that are Dickie's passion. Something of a blank slate himself — we see little of Tom's present life and learn nothing of his background — he works hard to be prepared to ingratiate himself into Dickie's life.

"The Greenleaf name opens a lot of doors," the chauffeur tells him as he drives Tom to the dock where the ship to Italy awaits. When disembarking, Tom tries out the power of the name by introducing himself as Dickie Greenleaf to a pleasant young woman also trying to escape the stultifying atmosphere of American wealth by fleeing to Europe. Meredith Logue (Cate Blanchett) bonds with Tom's "Dickie" immediately. Tom's deception

seems a harmless prank, and we're never sure why he tries on Dickie's identity at this point, just as we're never sure why, when he meets Dickie, he forthrightly describes his talents of impersonating people and forging signatures.

Tom reveals to Dickie his mission, then carefully stages his apparent interest in jazz in order to pique Dickie's interest and be able to stay longer, on the elder Greenleaf's tab. He wiggles his way into friendships with both Dickie, played with golden boy shine and charisma by Jude Law, and his fiancée, Marge Sherwood (a restrained and intuitive Gwyneth Paltrow). Surrounded by the lush scenery of an ancient Italian seaside town, and seduced by Dickie's glowing smile and effervescent charm, it's easy to understand why Tom lusts after Dickie's lifestyle, his status — and his body. A tense but subtle scene in which Dickie is bathing while the two men play chess underlines Tom's desires.



Identity Crisis: Does Tom Ripley (Matt Damon) want to be Marge or Dickie (Gwyneth Paltrow and Jude Law)?

Dickie is not known for his constancy, however. He's not faithful to Marge (and later rejects his Italian mistress), then begins to withdraw his favor from Tom as well, spurred on by a boorish pal who has no tolerance for hangers-on or pretenders. On their final trip together, alone on a small boat, Tom tries to lay out his plans for returning to Italy under his own auspices, only to be rejected by Dickie, who derides him as a leech. In a combination of outrage at the insults, pain at being once again rejected, and self-defense as the men struggle, Tom kills Dickie. The next scene shows him curled around Dickie's bloody body as if trying to create the now-impossible scenario of them being lovers.

Life, however, goes on. When a hotel employee calls him Mr. Greenleaf, Tom decides to go along with it. Soon those skills in impersonation and forgery come in handy as Tom takes over Dickie's life, cashing Dickie's checks, breaking up with Marge via letter, even wearing Dickie's clothes. Meeting Meredith again in Rome, he half-

heartedly courts her as Dickie, "confessing" his uncertain emotional state after the breakup with Marge. His plans almost run awry when Marge shows up in Rome, escorted by the handsome Peter Smith-Kingsley (Jack Davenport) with whom Tom feels an instant connection.

Several manipulations and another murder later, we learn more about Dickie's dark side and see Tom start a relationship with Peter. Tom expresses angst about his past, but is the love of a good man enough to extricate him from the wall of lies he's built into his life? I wish I could answer in the affirmative, but in the end, just as Dickie could not escape Tom, Tom cannot escape Dickie. To say more would give away the ending of this complex and alluring film.

Why do we care? Are we willing to initially forgive Tom his crimes of passion and impersonation because we, too, have thought or said "If only I was him" or "If I had her money..." about a celebrity or public figure? And if one lie leads to another, one death to another, could it be that part of us understands how tempting the path seems and how hard it is to extricate oneself once the blood has been shed? Are there days when we feel, as Tom states, that "it's better to be a fake somebody than a real nobody."

Just as Tom's impersonations at first seem harmless, so does the get-rich-quick scheme of a disgruntled puppeteer in "Being John Malkovich." In this surreal film, Craig Schwartz (a scruffy John Cusack), finds work at a filing service on the 7 1/2 floor of a New York office building (yes, it's between the 7th and 8th floors). When moving a file cabinet, he finds a portal that allows whoever entering it to look through the eyes of actor John Malkovich (played by Malkovich himself) for fifteen minutes. Soon he and his partner in the scheme, Maxine, are selling the fifteen-minute slots of being John Malkovich for \$200 a session — and people are lining the length of the hallway for a chance.

Craig discovers that Maxine is in love with his wife, Lotte — but only when she's inhabiting Malkovich. Jealousy leads him to discover that he need not merely observe while being Malkovich, but can control the actor's movements. Soon he's taken the actor over completely, using Malkovich's reputation to usher in a puppeteering revolution and marrying Maxine.

But he's not the only party who needs Malkovich's body in order to attain immortality. In the resulting conflict, Malkovich's own identity is irrelevant; is this indicative of the way celebrity's real lives are replaced by a series of images designed to feed the public's desire? Is Craig's use of Malkovich's body and reputation any different from Tom Ripley's appropriation of Dickie Greenleaf's privileged life?

In "American Beauty," the objects of desire are closer to home, but the changes they cause in


their admirers are no less radical. Lester Burnham, played by Kevin Spacey, falls hopelessly for the aspiring fashion model classmate of his teenaged daughter, while his real estate agent wife Carolyn (Annette Bening) regards local realtor icon Buddy Kane with a mix of admiration and jealousy.

Unlike the other films mentioned, lust and desire in "American Beauty" lead not to loss of identity but to greater self-knowledge. Lester begins working out, he quits his meaningless job, and kicks his way out of his suburban disillusionment without harming the girl he eventually learns is not the sire of his fantasies. Carolyn, meanwhile, finds that her affair with Buddy has given her greater self-confidence and she relearns the joy in desire and in being desired, though her transformation is not as complete as that of her husband.

One of the themes of the movie is to see beauty even in unconventional places, and that must include looking within oneself. The characters who do that successfully come to the end of the movie transformed. It may be celebrities and fantasy figures that inspired them but the change has to come from within if it is to be real.

There are queer characters of various types in all three movies. "The Talented Mr. Ripley" has been criticized for portraying a gay or bisexual murderer, but anyone willing to embrace the complexity of the film will realize that Ripley's sexuality is not the principle cause of his criminal actions. Rather, the fact that the film is set in a much more repressive era contributes to some of Tom's issues. Is Tom gay or is he bisexual? While he could be read either way, my feeling was that his affections were only truly engaged by the men in the film; Meredith seemed little more than a required accessory for someone of "Dickie's" station.

In "Being John Malkovich," the Maxine and Lotte women begin their affair only when Lotte is inhabiting Malkovich, but by the end of the film they've outgrown the need for Malkovich's influence (in any sense), and declare their love for each other. "American Beauty" features small roles by the fabulously functional neighborhood couple of Jim and Jim (the only characters who seem blissfully happy throughout the movie), while another character's response to his conflicted sexuality shows us the dangers of homophobia and shame are still with us.

Taken individually, each movie is an enjoyable experience. Experienced as a triptych (as I did accidentally), you're suddenly exposed to a world where some people's obsessions with celebrity and desire lead them down paths that obscure who they are, while others use the light of their passions to reach beyond themselves and see their own beauty and potential. Which would you choose? 

Winter Gender-Free Dance Camp

Lavender Country & Folk Dancers invite all interested folks to attend Gender-Free Dance Camp March 3-5, 2000 at the Becket/Chimney Corner YMCA Camp in Becket, Massachusetts. Activities will include contra dancing, English country dancing, international folk dancing, singing, a variety show, games, and a costume dance party. Registration for members is \$170, non-members \$190. Work exchanges are available to reduce registration to \$100. For more information, contact Jim LaBonte at 781-642-7522, jbdakota@ix.netcom.com.

Swing and Ballroom Dances

Enjoy "Swingtime" evenings this winter the first Saturday of each month: February 5, March 4, April 1 and May 6. \$7 per person, no partner necessary. Free beginners swing lesson at 8 p.m. Dancing to DJ, 9 - 11:30 p.m. At Ballet, ETC dance studio in Brookline. Call 617-364-7207 for directions and more info.

Feminist Expo 2000 for Women's Empowerment

Thousands of feminists from around the world will gather in Baltimore, Maryland, March 31-April 2, 2000 for a Feminist Expo sponsored by The Feminist Majority Foundation. The expo will be held at the Baltimore Convention Center. For more information call 703-522-2214, e-mail: expo2000@feminist.org or check out www.feminist.org.



Movie Review: *Being John Malkovich*

Reviewed by Elle Thomas

Craig Schwartz (John Cusack) is an unemployed puppeteer in New York City, married to Lottie (Cameron Diaz), a pet-shop owner. Their apartment is a menagerie of pet-shop rejects, including an iguana with an infected puncture wound, and a chimpanzee in psychotherapy. Craig regularly retreats to his workroom sanctuary, where he carves puppets and expresses his emotions through them. Pushed by Lottie, and his own deepening sense of failure, he answers a classified ad for a file clerk position.

Craig's new workplace is a bizarre site. It has 4-foot high ceilings, an executive secretary

who mishears every word spoken to her, a lecherous boss, and an opportunistic ice queen/vamp named Maxine (Keener). Maxine toys with Craig; as he tries one line after another to make time with her, she rebuffs him with retorts like, "If you ever got me, you wouldn't have the slightest idea what to do with me."

During one trip into the "deep storage" room, Craig uncovers another peculiarity — a door to a dirt tunnel. Of course he crawls through it, and discovers that he is, literally, pushed inside the mind of John Malkovich (played marvelously by himself). After fifteen minutes, he drops from the sky onto the side of the New Jersey Turnpike. He rushes back to Maxine to describe this experience, and how he is changed by it. She coldly motions for him to jump out the window, and leaves the room. However, that evening Maxine calls him with a business proposition — selling "rides" through the portal for \$200 each. Craig overcomes his initial moral objection to exploit this portal, because she, a master manipulator, tells him, "I need you, Craigie." Cusack's Craig is never flat. He's both a lovable failure and a conniving knave.

The film is, in some ways, a bisexual coming out story. After her first trip through the portal, Lottie declares that she finally understands who she is — a transsexual. And Maxine insinuates herself into Malkovich's bed while Lottie is inside him because she is smitten with Lottie. She even calls Malkovich "Lottie" during sex. When Maxine first acknowledges her feelings to Lottie, she tells her, "But only as John, honey." After many plot twists (which should be experienced first-hand), both characters come to an understanding about their sexuality.

I imagine that the Hollywood pitch for this film went something like, "It's *Desperately Seeking Susan* meets *Buckaroo Bonsai*, with a dash of *Face/Off*." It is quite amazing that such an original concept actually made it onto the screen. The physical and situational comedy is brilliant. Diaz is quite believable in the role of homely and confused Lottie (aided by a frizzy wig that makes her virtually unrecognizable). Keener's Maxine is at once loathsome and seductive. Malkovich has a lot of fun playing himself, but also took risks exposing "himself" in emotionally painful flashbacks, including a grade-school bus torment after wetting his pants.

However, this is not simply a light film. Serious questions about death, the nature of the soul, and immortality are raised. And the ending, at least for one character, is heartbreakingly sad. Upon reflection, there are a few flaws, but this film's uniqueness and humor far outweigh its imperfections. ▽

BETH DAMSKY, MSW, LICSW

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CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

February 29 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: How will you build a bi family? See February 1st.

March 1 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See February 2nd.

March 3 ♦ Friday

Bi Coffee Night, 8 p.m. Start the weekend off right with other Biversity folks at the Diesel Cafe in Davis Square. Heidi and Lisa will host. 257 Elm Street in Somerville, Davis Square on the Red Line.

March 4 ♦ Saturday

Safe Colleges Conference at Tufts University in Medford. Keynote speakers will be Leslie Feinberg, author of *Stone Butch Blues* and *Transgender Warriors*, and Urvashi Vaid, Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Free registration and lunch. Pre-register at <http://ase.tufts.edu/lgbrc/safecolleges2000> or e-mail lgbt@tufts.edu or call 617-627-3770.



March 7 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call 617-354-8807 for topic. See February 1st.

March 8 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. See February 13th.

March 9 ♦ Thursday

BBWN Introductory Meeting, 7:30-9:00 p.m. A safe space for women to connect with the bisexual community. Cambridge Women's Center, 26 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 617-354-8807.

March 12 ♦ Sunday

Video Afternoon at Natalie's in Roslindale, noon. Videos, comfort, and munchies provided. BYOB. For those who wish, we'll get take-out food. Call Natalie at 617-327-0772 for directions and to suggest videos, or e-mail NRivkin777@aol.com.

March 13 ♦ Monday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Femme/Butch." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140 or e-mail to eruthstr@mail.lesley.edu.

March 15 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space. (See February 16th)

March 18 ♦ Saturday

BBWN Potluck Brunch and Hike at Elle's in Somerville, 11:00 a.m. - 1 p.m. After the brunch, those who are interested will pile into cars and go in search of a place to hike. Be prepared for possibly muddy/snowy walking conditions. E-mail tundraflies@webname.com for directions or call 617-718-0386.

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Meet at the ever-popular

Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square in Somerville. Nearest T is Davis Square on the Red Line.

Biversity Planning Meeting, 1:00 p.m. The meeting will follow immediately after the brunch at Johnny D's. Bring your great ideas for upcoming events!

March 21 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See February 2nd.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call 617-354-8807 for topic. See February 1st.

March 26 ♦ Friday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Ethiopian food will be shared at Addis Red Seat, 544 Tremont St. in Boston's South End. Nearest T stop is Back Bay on the Orange Line.

March 27 ♦ Monday

Bisexual People of Color Potluck Dinner, 7-9 p.m. Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. See February 28th.

March 28 ♦ Tuesday

BBWN Pre-mailing Dinner, 6 p.m. at Bertucci's on Stanhope St., just two doors down from the Bi Office.

BiWomen mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. Label, stuff, and lick. Actually the licking is *after* the mailing. Ha! Join us.

Biversity Calendar Mailing at BRC Office, 7-9 p.m.

April 29 ♦ Saturday

Plan Ahead: Bi Activism Conference in Washington, D.C. on the day before the Millenium March on Washington for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender civil rights. Sign up at www.onelist.com/community/biconf to receive updates about the conference. And check out www.mmow.org for details about the Millenium March and the Millenium Festival.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

4th Mondays:

Bi People of Color Potluck, 7-9 p.m. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. For info call 617-424-9595.

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Thursdays: The Midway Cafe, Washington Street in Jamaica Plain.

Saturdays: Lava Bar in Kenmore Square, 575 Commonwealth Ave. at the Howard Johnson's.



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The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Thursdays: Single Jewish Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Group. 6:30-8 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street. Info: 617-499-9612.

3rd Thursdays: SpeakOut Meeting. 8 p.m., at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope St., Boston. Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45 p.m., theme program starts at 8 p.m. Info: 617-354-0133.

1st & 3rd Thursdays: Bi Women's Resource & Support Group. 7 p.m. at the Women's Health Consortium, 379 State St., Portsmouth, NH. For info call 603-431-1669 or contact Sue Corcoran at schmoo@nh.ultranet.com.

CALENDAR

February 1 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Keeping it Platonic: Boundaries." Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

February 2 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

February 6 ♦ Sunday

SpeakOut Speakers Training, 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Interested 16-24 year olds can attend all day training, (breakfast and lunch provided) and after completing two speaking engagements will be paid \$100. Call 617-450-9776 or e-mail mstone@speakoutboston.org.

"Hollywood Censored: Movies, Morality, & the Production Code," Noon. Free film and panel discussion at Coolidge Corner Theatre in Brookline. Film experts and historians will explore the Production Code's influence over Hollywood and the role of freedom of expression and cultural values in contemporary film. BBWN members who attend can gather afterwards and go out for coffee nearby.

February 9 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. The BRC board meets monthly to work on educational programs, the bi office, the web site, the international bi organizing, fund raising, etc. All bi community members welcome to attend. The meeting is at 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

February 12 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Games Night, 3 p.m. Join us for games on the second floor of the Whimsical Bestiary. E-mail heidi@aq.org for directions. Bring your games or just come and play ours.

February 12 ♦ Saturday

Valentine's Dance for Women, hosted by FEVER! Dance Productions and DJ Dee. 8 p.m. - midnight, \$10 cover, cash bar, complimentary snacks. At the Sons of Italy Hall, Winchester, 15 minutes north of Boston on Rte 93, exit 36. Call 781-648-0722 or email dee@djdee.com for more info.



February 13 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Potluck Brunch, 11 a.m. Join us for our monthly brunch at a member's home in Brookline.



Thanks for reading
BiWomen.

Do you subscribe?

How about a little
commitment?

Bring a dish, relax, eat, and socialize with other members. Call 617-734-4636 for directions.

February 15 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-9 p.m. See February 2nd.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "First Female Love." See February 1st.

February 16 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space, 7-9 p.m. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. Tonight's topic is "Bisexuality and kids." A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for the space. BiSpace is held at the BRC at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston.

February 19 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Meet at Christopher's at 1920 Massachusetts Ave. in Porter Square. Closest T is Porter Square on the Red Line.

BBWN Dance Night at Lava Bar, 10 p.m. Come out and keep warm on the dance floor with other sassy bi women. Call Natalie to arrange to meet up, 617-327-0772.

February 20 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Skating Party at Frog Pond on the Common, 2 p.m. Gather at the entrance gate. There is an admission fee and a rental fee for those who will skate. After skating we will find a warm place to relax and revive those ankles. Snazzy little skirt outfits are optional.



February 27 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Enjoy Malaysian food at Tigerlily, 8 Westland Ave in Boston. Nearest T stops are Symphony on the E branch of the Green Line or Hynes on the B, C, and D branches.

February 28 ♦ Monday

Bisexual People of Color Potluck Dinner, 7-9 p.m. Join other bisexual people of color for a potluck dinner and discussion group. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets in the library at the Boston Living Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. For more information, call 617-424-9595 and leave a message for Ananda or Maria Christina. Para informacion en espanol 617-277-2017.

CALENDAR continues on page 11

Photo by Natalie Rivkin



A few lovelies and their butch from the 1999 Butch/Femme Party hosted by Carolyn Taylor.

Femme/ Butch

A Local Butch/ Femme Tradition

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

If you have been fortunate enough to be part of the extended network of lesbian and bi women connected to the Cambridge Women's Center's rap groups over the last few years, you may have been privy to an invitation to Carolyn Taylor's infamous Butch/Femme Party. She has held this party five times now so I asked her about how it all got started.

"My inspiration for the first party was that I read an article about some women in Ptown who held a drag queen party. I thought, wouldn't that be fun. But then I thought that people wouldn't do it so I modified it to be a butch/femme theme. After the first party it was obvious that people really got into the idea. Women appeared in tuxedos and prom dresses and sequined gowns. It gave them the opportunity to open their closets and to wear some femme outfit they don't wear any more or some butch outfit they can't wear to work. Everybody had a place to explore different parts of their persona."

Taylor said that over the years there have been many different interpretations of butch

Tradition continues on page 7

Clothing, the Girl, and the Myth of "the Middle"

By Annie Goglia

I have vivid memories of a favorite dress I had as a little girl of five. It was blue, close fitted on top with a full skirt which flounced out unnaturally with the help of the attached netting slip underneath. Although it was 1962, the dress was more of the 1950's than the 1960's. I loved pretending to be a ballerina or a nurse or a mom. Does this make me a femme? Another favorite outfit was a hand-me-down cowboy outfit, complete with chaps, gun, holster and ten-gallon hat. I loved pretending to be an Indian (Native American) brave or Spiderman or a dad. Does that make me a butch?

I knew there was power in both roles, and didn't want to give up either of them. At age seven, we were still lining up to go into school by gender - boys in one line, girls in another. One day I stood smack in the middle and declared, "I'm not a girl or a boy, I'm both!" It wasn't that I actually wanted to be a boy, I wanted the freedoms that gender possessed. The other kids told me to get back in line. I did, but only outwardly.

Middle continues on page 6

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Volunteers of the Month

Gail
Robyn Ochs
Elle Thomas
[REDACTED]
Jane Kaplan
[REDACTED]
Annie Goglia
Andrea
Debbie Block-
Schwenk
Kevin Block-
Schwenk



*And many more
wonderful
women! You
know who you
are! Thank you,
thank you, thank
you!*

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Happy Spring!

Once again our fabulous local writers have risen to the occasion and produced some wonderful pieces on our theme. Thank you all for sharing your experiences and impressions with us. We are really lucky to have such a creative group of women in Boston. I would like to extend the invitation to all of you who do not live near Boston to submit pieces for the newsletter. And not just writing. We are always looking for photos and artwork to make the pages look a little more interesting. We want your input! We are a large, diverse, vibrant community and it would be great to have that reflected more on these pages.

The big news around New England for queer folk is that Vermont seems to be on its way to legalizing same-sex unions. The State House of Representatives passed the bill (76-69) in mid-March and it will now move to the State Senate. Governor Dean is expected to sign it if it gets to his desk. This all may be a done deal by the end of April. Just in time for June weddings! Ha!

I hope you will be coming out to march with the GLBT movement and allies in DC on April 30th. If you do go, please consider submitting your impressions of the march, and maybe a photo or two from your experience. With a city full of queers there will certainly be great photo opps on every corner. Please share them with us.

Ellyn Ruthstrom



Butch on Butch Action at the 1999
Butch/ Femme Party!

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

Next in *Bi Women*:

The *BiWomen* theme for

June/July is:

The Politics Issue: Bi Space

Where is the bi political movement today? How much space do we take up in the GLBT movement? What do you think the bi agenda should be? What did we learn from the Millennium March? Were bis included? How does your bisexuality effect your activism?

DEADLINE: May 12, 2000

Future Issues in 2000

August/September:

Body Image

October/November:

**Bicultural, Biracial,
Bisexual**



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*If you do not want your name published,
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Safe Colleges Conference

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

Tufts University felt like truly safe space the weekend of March 4th when the Massachusetts Safe Colleges 2000 conference was held. Several hundred queer student activists and their allies gathered to hear Urvashi Vaid and Leslie Feinberg's keynotes and to participate in workshops ranging from campus organizing and body image issues for women, to being an out politician and dating violence in the queer community. Judging by the enthusiasm for the keynotes, the attendees were fired up by the gathering.

Vaid and Feinberg both emphasized the need for the queer movement to keep the politics complex by crossing over identity borders and combining agendas of all progressive movements. Vaid noted that homophobia does not exist in isolation, that it operates with sexism, racism, and classism, and they all need to be fought with linked energies. She also made a case for consideration of the term "sexual prejudice" as a more accurate description of what we experience from the right wing than homophobia.

Feinberg spoke eloquently of the shared history of unionists, civil rights activists, and queers in fighting anti-busing racists in Boston and anti-choice fanatics in Buffalo. And she made a plea for unity of the movements to help

free Mumia Abu-Jamal, a political prisoner being held in Pennsylvania. She noted there will be a huge rally May 7th in Madison Square Garden in New York City to protest his continued imprisonment and urged all to attend.

My own choice of workshops were the butch/femme one in the morning and the afternoon one on "Debunking the Notion of a Hierarchy of Oppressions." The former was a lively discussion about personal experiences and perceptions about the terms. One interesting offshoot was a common experience by many of the women of "femme guilt," which femmes experienced when they passed as straight and felt they had to be hyperqueer by wearing buttons and rainbows and other paraphernalia. The latter workshop dealt with the pyramid of oppressions, as Rev. Irene Monroe called it, and encouraged participants to instead think of the oppressions in terms of a wheel and how the "isms" are all spokes intertwined.

BBWN's Robyn Ochs facilitated workshops on bisexuality and commented, "The conference provided a wonderful – and fun – opportunity for student activists from various campuses to get together and share their experiences. It helps break down isolation and gets students to realize that they are not alone." ▽

Bi2K

Saturday, April 29, Bi2K: Activism for a New Millennium, a national conference on local bisexual issues will take place in Washington, DC. Being held at the DC Jewish Community Center in Dupont Circle, the conference will run from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. and will include a morning plenary, a working lunch, and afternoon workshops. Pre-registration is \$30-40 sliding scale, registration at the door will be \$40 for all. Send check to Rochelle Myers or Jennifer Coderre, B.I./Conference, P.O. Box 33662, Washington, DC 20036-3662. Check out the web site at www.bisexualinsurgence.com for more details or e-mail bi@bisexualinsurgence.org. Bi2K does not endorse the Queer Millennium March but happens to be gathering the day before. The local bi community is not organizing any formal transportation to the conference or the march. Contact the Lesbian Avengers if you are looking for transportation from the Boston area. Boston_Avengers@hotmail.com or www.lesbianavengers.org.

Fenway Launches BiHealth Program

Fenway Community Health has announced the launch of a new bisexual health program called BiHealth, aimed at providing HIV/STD prevention and education to address the health concerns of those who have sex with men and women. Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, BiHealth is the first and only program of its kind in the Commonwealth, and is one of the few publicly-funded HIV prevention programs for bisexuals in the country. Recently, the coordinator of the new BiHealth program, Marshall Miller, answered some questions for *BiWomen*. If you want to know more about the program, contact Marshall at 617-927-6032 or email mmiller@fenwayhealth.org.

Can you describe how BiHealth got started at Fenway?

Since starting work at Fenway in 1997, I've looked for ways to address the needs of the bisexual community in the HIV prevention and education here. This included collaborating with the Bisexual Resource Center on several projects. The Playing Safe With Both Teams: Bisexuality and HIV Prevention (<http://www.biresource.org/bothteams>) conference was the largest of those projects. The Department of Public Health noticed this work and asked if we'd like to focus on prevention and education for bisexual people and people who have sex with men and women but who don't identify as bi. It seemed like a great opportunity to create a program for our community.

What is the Bi Health mission?

BiHealth seeks to address the health concerns of those who have sex with people of more than one gender. Part of the process over the next couple of months will be to identify what those health concerns are through the upcoming community meetings. The goals of BiHealth will be directly based on the needs of the community.

How are you trying to do outreach to the bi community?

Boston has a wonderful bisexual community, organized through groups like the BBWN, the BRC, Biversity Boston, the Bi People of Color (BiPoC) group, etc. Part of the outreach will be to see how BiHealth can support the work of

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AIDS Quilt Visits Maine

The AIDS Memorial Quilt will be displayed in Ogunquit, Maine, May 27-29, 2000. The NAMES Project Maine and the Host Committee of the AIDS Memorial Quilt will bring the quilt to the Dunaway Center in Ogunquit, Maine. Volunteers are needed and new quilt panels will be accepted. Call Marge Tyrus at 207-646-1310 for more information.

Out 'N' Equal Spring Conference

Out 'N' Equal (ONE) is presenting its spring conference entitled, "Building and Protecting Our Families" on May 6, 2000 at the Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord, New Hampshire. Want to present a workshop or help out with planning? Contact Susi at 603-643-6664 or susi@dartmouth.edu. Pre-registration online at www.geocities.com/lgbtnh.

FEMME/BUTCH PHOTO ESSAY

All photos by [REDACTED]

Femme: Feminine. Soft. Fluffy. Submissive. Skirts. Makeup. Long hair.

Butch: Masculine. Hard. Rough. Aggressive. Pants. Makeup free. Short hair.

Femme? Butch? Which are you?

These are just a few descriptions that come to mind when I think about the femme/butch identity. Yet the definition of these complementary terms

are perceived differently by different women in the bisexual community, as well as by women in the queer community at large. Due to these differences, I decided to ask a few BBWN members how they defined themselves in respect to the femme/butch "bi"chotomy. I personally do not identify as either femme or butch. See my related piece, "I'm Not a Butch!" on page 7.



Leather

By Jane Kaplan

I like it smooth as skin

It was
Worn and polished, fits me like a glove
It suits

me
mm I'm in it right up to my chin

I love it
Make me take it off for you

-Soft-
I'm naked underneath I'm ready for you
-Yes-

Here I am -
Just this skin

Jane:

I think of myself as butch because that's who I am inside, that's how I move. My best girlfriend told me I dance like a guy and I laughed, but she's right. I dance like a guy, I smoke like a guy, I even think like a guy

sometimes, from what guys tell me. I grew up boy-identified, which wasn't too popular in my hometown, at least not the way I did it. I mean, the chicks all wore leather and rode Harleys and got tattoos before it was chic, but they're all big hair, and I'm... not. Still, I can be really femme, and I like that. For dress-up, I've got this sweet party dress I break out for fancy fun. Short sleeve short cut, I'm all thigh and curves wrapped in dark blue lace. Toss in a pair of pearls for respectability and I'm good to go. Can't ride a Harley in it, but life's full of compromises.



Lucy:

Femme/Butch. I think of myself as having both masculine and feminine in me. I like the sensuality of long hair, but I need the comfort of pants & sneakers & sweaters. I try to balance my feminine emotional side with my masculine logical/rational/critical side. Sometimes I am not aware of my appearance and whether it's masculine or feminine - I just am.

Elle:

Clothing is just one aspect of the femme/butch equation. My self confidence and self perception remain the same whether I'm barefoot wearing a sarong, or carrying a 60 lb. backpack in hiking boots.



Trois

Keep an eye out for an independent film entitled *Trois*, a film about a black married couple who try out a threesome. Jermaine (Gary Dourdan) is a young corporate tycoon who is newly married and has recently moved to Atlanta, Georgia with his wife Jasmine (Kenya Moore). While becoming settled into the new city and job, Jermaine becomes bored with his seemingly mundane lifestyle at home. He asks his wife to engage in a menage a trois with another woman to generate more excitement within their relationship and she reluctantly agrees. The film explores what happens in the marriage. This is not an endorsement of the film, having not viewed it yet, and we can only hope that they treat threesomes with more sensitivity than past Hollywood attempts. The film's website (www.trois-themovie.com) as of press time did not list any Massachusetts viewings of the film, so keep *BiWomen* posted if it does appear near you.

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By Elle Thomas

Butches are strong. They speak their minds in confident voices, walk with sure solid strides. They ignore those who say, "You can't because you're a girl," and they challenge those who patronize and condescend. They will not be herded down a cow path of convention. Neither are they firebrands for their own amusement. They simply will not cede control of their bodies and brains.

In high school, I rebuilt engines in auto shop, played drums in marching band, and drove a pickup truck. I hung out (as much as any loner hangs) exclusively with guys. I was mentally and physically tenacious, earning both entry into a competitive college and athletic awards. I was a radical person, and I knew it. But I wasn't trying to be different; I deviated intrinsically, saliently, and conspicuously from the median. Finding space to fit in was arduous. I often refused to make the effort. I didn't yet identify as queer, but I did think of myself as butch. Being butch meant being unashamed of being strong and being female, of being smart and being female, of being mechanically-inclined and being female. I embraced the word butch. It was a positive hallmark — or so I thought.

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The Drag King Anthology

The Drag King Anthology is calling for papers that explore issues surrounding the female-to-male gender performances of drag kings. The editors seek submissions which accessibly address questions including: What is drag, and how does stage "kinging" differ from other forms of gender performance, including "queening" or FTM performance in everyday life? In what ways is FTM drag political? How do performances of masculinity intersect/overlap with performances of social class, race, ethnicity, age, sexual identity? Scholarly essays, personal memoirs, photos and illustrations are welcome. Contact any of the editors listed below to discuss future submissions. The deadline is June 15, 2000. 10,000 word max. Three paper copies should be mailed to: Kathleen LeBesco, Communication Arts Dept., Marymount Manhattan College, 221 East 71st St., New York, NY 10021, klebesco@mmm.edu, 212-774-4861; Donna Troka, Emory Univ., donnatroka@hotmail.com; and Jean Noble, Dept. of English, 208 Stong College, York Univ., 4700 Keele St., Toronto, Ontario, CANADA, M3J 1P3, jnoble@yorku.ca.

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When my childhood friend Kitty and I played house with her little brother, Billy, it was the unspoken rule that I could be the mom or the dad, Billy could be the dad or the baby (but never the mom), and Kitty could be the mom or the baby (but never the dad). Kitty was petite and blonde even though she was a year older, I was always bigger, and often felt like an awkward gawky butch around her. Her mom was a southern lady, and taught her daughter well in the art of leading without being aggressive or masculine. Although our play was mostly cooperative, she did her share or more of taking charge, and had more worldly knowledge than I did, but had that cute naïve femme persona. While she sometimes struggled with being taken seriously, she was more popular than I was. On some level she was able to keep a chunk of her personal power in that femme persona in a way I couldn't figure out at that age. I was a little jealous of her, but I knew I didn't really want to be her.

In fifth grade, when it was time to choose an instrument to play in the band, I deliberately chose the clarinet because it was not a gender identified instrument. For instance, trumpets were for boys and flutes were for girls. I did not want to be identified with anything too femmy or too butch. I strove to be in between.

Still, when adolescence hit, I was hit hard. Part of me wanted to be a girlie girl, the kind boys would notice, and girls would admire. I couldn't wait for bras and girdles and stockings. That they were uncomfortable mattered little to me then, it was a small price to pay for womanhood. Unfortunately, as time went on, these markers of femininity let me down. Instead of becoming a femme fatale, I joined the ranks of insecure teenage girls in angst over my weight, my looks. I could never measure up. Times like those give femme it's bad rap. So part of me rebelled. I wanted to be cool and androgynous, so I went through a phase of carrying a gas mask bag instead of a purse and wearing my dad's caps and ties to school.

Over the years I have experimented with different looks: very short hair, long flowing hair and in between. Mini skirts. Midi skirts. Articles of men's clothing. Tight revealing shirts. Shaved legs. Unshaved legs. Bra, no bra. Peasant blouses. Make up. No make up. T-shirts and tight jeans. Overalls in bright green. Business suit in bright red. The "social worker/teacher look," skirts or

pants with matching blouses, "professional but not corporate." Some felt confining, some liberating. Some both.

For parties, anything was possible. I could remake myself over and over. Mostly I've chosen different forms of femme, from the sleaze to the snakecharmer to the southern belle. From the diva to the dominatrix. Sometimes I've chosen the butch end of the spectrum, usually soft butch, but once I did male drag, becoming "Andy" for one New Year's Eve. Dressing up for me is a form of play, but more than that. It is a way of trying on different identities and personas. Experimenting. Pushing the edges. And, let's be honest, getting attention.

About two years ago, I started a job which has no dress code. The distinction between work clothes and casual clothes is gone. It's allowed me more freedom. For my everyday clothing, comfort and ease of care rate at least as high as appearance. Perhaps higher. I, who once wore jeans I could barely zip up, now rarely wear them at all because they feel too constricting. Because of this priority I wear mostly stretch pants or leggings from fall through the spring. In summer it's mostly shorts and cotton skirts. Every now and then I wear a dress just because I want to wear one, not because I *have* to wear one. I used to wear accessories most of the time, matching dangling earrings were a must, and I often wore necklaces or decorative scarves. Now I rarely think to put them on. Does this make me butch, because I



Photo by [redacted]

refuse to follow uncomfortable fashions, and rarely wear a dress? Does it make me femme because I love to play with color in my clothing, and actually do enjoy wearing a dress now and then?

Most of the self-identified butches and femmes I've met in the queer community no longer take the roles on as rigidly or seriously as in earlier years. For me, butch and femme are terms that loosely describe certain sets of appearances and behaviors. A label can be a useful tool to create support and a sense of community. But it also brings with it a set of baggage, limits, and stereotypes. I figure if I can use these terms to explore and experiment with certain aspects of myself, and me in my relationship to others, they can be useful. I can notice I feel sort of butch or femme around certain women or men, and use that to explore the power dynamics of the relationship. If I defined myself as a butch or a femme as an identity, I could easily feel confined

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I'm Not a Butch!

And I don't necessarily consider myself to be a femme either. I'd like to think of myself as a balanced mixture of both. And, my friends, this is not the first time. In fact, this is yet again just another of many bi-identities I hold true. You see, I am a biracial, bicultural, bireligious, bisexual woman. Being a woman is probably the only thing about me that's not mixed. I am 100% pure female!

But let's get back to the femme/butch thing. I wasn't particularly fond of the terms and the negative connotations that came with them. I'm sure some of you may understand where I'm coming from, and many of you may not. You see I'm relatively new to the bisexual community. What I mean by "new" is that I've only self-identified as a bisexual woman for the past few years now. Before that, I identified as a straight woman. A very open-minded straight woman, but a straight woman nonetheless. I think I was in college the first time I heard the terms butch/femme. Back then, the terms femme/butch were equated with the lesbian community, and held derogatory and negative overtones, especially the term "butch." Butch was directly associated with being a dyke, being manly. And dyke was often used in homopho-

By

bic ways by straight people around me. It was a slur and despite now being in the community, it still holds that negativity to me. As for the term femme, well, femme was associated with being weak. And no one wanted to be considered weak. So, I decided to stop using the terms all together as I didn't want to offend anyone.

After graduating from college, when my sexuality began to be a quandary for me, I struggled with the term bisexual as well. At the time, the term bisexual also had negative connotations. People thought that being bisexual meant that you were promiscuous, unfaithful, perverted, etc. So instead, I just identified as a woman.

The words, or labels, don't work for me because they don't leave enough space for multiplicity. Being called a butch denies the fact that I am feminine, and being called femme denies the fact that I am strong. It's similar to my problem with being considered black instead of biracial. It inherently ignores the identity and heritage of one of my parents.

So, until the community comes up with a term that is a balanced mixture of both, I will continue to see myself simply as a very diverse woman! ▽

In/Visibility: Lesbian Lives In Mexico

Want to study Spanish while learning about lesbian life in Mexico? Visit Cetlalic Alternative Spanish Language School in Cuernavaca, Mexico and have roundtable discussions, lectures, field trips, museum visits, and encounters with local community groups to gain an understanding of the cultural context of lesbian identity in Mexico. Students are evaluated and placed at the appropriate level of Spanish language instruction with a maximum of five students in each class. The dates are June 11 - 30, 2000. The program includes a homestay with a Mexican lesbian or couple. It also includes activities of the Lesbian Cultural Days in Mexico City and the 23rd Gay Pride March in Mexico City. For more information contact: cetlalic@mail.giga.com (Marisela Chaplin - Lesbian Program Coordinator) or visit our web site www.giga.com/~cetlalic.

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or defined by the label. (Some people have taken on the label, and do not seem to have fallen into that trap, I say more power to them!!) I use butch and femme in a light, joking way with friends (saying—"you're such a butch" when someone, male or female, removes that stuck jar lid), or as an adjective ("isn't this leopard print dress just too femme").

I look back in wonder at my seven-year old self who knew she wanted a life without gender role limitations. At forty-two years old I'm still envisioning what the world would be like without proscribed gender roles, beyond the need for labels. I'm catching a glimpse of a way of being that can't be defined by linear or dualistic thinking. If there are no two defined ends, then there's no middle either. There is the complex and multidimensional aspect to each personality that affects and is affected by our culture. I'm not a butch or a femme—I'm fully me! ▽

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and of femme, especially noting "vintage femmes" as she put it, from the 30s, 40s, and 50s. Also, one year two girlfriends arrived together—one butch, one femme—and midway through the party they changed clothes. It was a great idea, sort of playing off the idea that lesbians share each other's clothes and celebrating the two sides of their personalities.

Starting out as a party for an extended group of friends, gathering has gained notoriety across the local queer women's community. This past year it was held as a fundraiser for the Washington Street Art Center and well over 100 women attended. "I noticed this year," Taylor commented, "that there were some great drag queens, which kind of relates back to my original inspiration. I really loved that." ▽

Carolyn Taylor and her girlfriend Melissa at the 1998 Butch/Femme Party.



Education Assistance Awards

Women Meeting

Women are now accepting applications for their Educational Assistance Awards for the year 2000. Two equal awards will be given up to \$500 each. The first award will go to someone in an undergraduate program or similar program for high school graduates or comparative GED applicants. The second award will be for a graduate or continuing education student. Applicants must be a lesbian, a bisexual female, or a women identified member of the transgender community; 18 or older; live in New Hampshire or Northern Massachusetts, and not be a current Women Meeting Women Steering Committee member. Selection is partially based on involvement in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community. Deadline for applications is May 31, 2000. To request application or for more information, contact Deborah E. Burch, WMW Educational Assistance Award, 16 First Ave., Methuen, MA 01844, 978-683-1033.

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Last year, during conversations with other bisexual women, I was shocked to hear that "butch" is considered an insult by many queers. I was equally surprised to learn that many people who know me well consider me more femme than butch. Okay, sure, I have a curvy figure. I often wear clothes accentuating it when I go out dancing, because it's fun. In hot weather, I tend to show a lot of skin; it's simply more comfortable. But I don't use cosmetics, perfume, deodorant, or razors. I could happily wear the same jeans, flannel shirt and Dr. Martens (or shorts, sports bra and Tevas) for days on end. I have a passion for camping, actually preferring a sleeping bag to sheets and blankets, and am nonchalant about showerless days and nights. How can someone with such utilitarian traits be femme?

And why had that word irked me so? Why did it invoke images of sequins, high heels, diets, gossip, weakness? Why had I given to butch all of the characteristics that I love about myself, leaving femme an evil step-sister? Why must thinking positively of butch imply that femme is negative? Isn't that the same binary thinking that I rail against as an avowed fencesitter?

Why have I had such negative feelings about femme? Quite possibly for many of the same reasons that I have been distant from women for much of my life. Friendships are forged through shared experiences, and my life, personality and interests have distanced me from the female collective. My childhood and adolescence were not graced with female peers and mentors who winter camped, studied martial arts, or deconstructed Marxism. I have no sisters. I lost my mother at age ten. Early on, other girls rejected me because I didn't want to play house with Barbie. And I, in turn, rejected them because they wouldn't climb trees and shoot archery.

Perhaps one reason many women dislike the term butch is that it has been used as a homophobic slur, a put-down. The intent, presumably, is to scoff, "Here is a woman who thinks she's a man, entitled to male privilege." Conventional culture says that to be assertive is unfeminine, and so a challenge to the institution of masculinity, to the concept that a woman can neither equal nor surpass a man. And for that very reason, I had welcomed the word. If I'm called a butch, then others recognize my strength. It's a backhanded, "You go grrl!" from the dominant paradigm.

Through the queer community, I have learned about stone butches, female-to-male transgendered, and gender queers. These are all labels used by females who would rather their bodies be less round, less womanly. They may or may not be jocks and mechanics, but they are butches. And I am not like them. I inhabit my natural body fully and without hesitation. I appreciate my breasts, my clitoris, the arc of my

hips. I welcome the puissance of my femaleness. Last summer, a man rounding a corner walked smack into my companion because his eyes were fixated on my chest. Many women would take offense at such an encounter; I could not stop laughing. Mind you, I don't seek out that sort of attention. But when it occurs, I am reminded that the possession of breasts and curves is a particularly potent power.

And through the bisexual community, I have become friends with women, individually and as a gender. As my world has broadened and I have matured, I have come to deeper understanding of labels. One could say I've been enlightened. My antagonism toward femme-ness has sloughed away. Today, I respect the concept of femme. I respect people who played with dolls as girls and who now invest energy into their appearance as women, who feel comfortable and self-assured in nail varnish and strappy shoes. And I no longer consider butch the lone bastion of strength and individuality. One of my heroes was Audrey Hepburn. She was a lithe femme beauty whose radiance on celluloid captured legions of hearts. In her work with UNICEF, she traveled to poverty-ravaged nations; she ate the same meager meals of rice or gruel as those who had no other option, cradled starving wailing babies in her graceful dancer's arms, lobbied tirelessly for greater humanitarian aid from the world's wealthy. How could I possibly consider her anything but valiant, earnest and strong?

I am completely at home with my femaleness and my femininity, as comfortable in a satin dress as in a tweed jacket and tie. I still volunteer my services when someone needs to move, and can still change a tire in the rain. But smiling warmly when someone holds a door for me or brings me flowers is also part of my nature. I know women who wear short frilly skirts, cosmetics, subscribe to *Cosmopolitan*, and who are the dominant or responsible partner with their T-shirt-and-jeans lovers. I know women who are physically ferocious yet cry easily watching a romantic movie. These cherished friends run the femme-butch continuum. I'd have difficulty assigning either label to any of them, as neither word encompasses a full dynamic range of outward personal expression and internal character. So, which label best applies to me? As the folk singer Ellis Paul wrote, "I'm a carnival of voices. It's hard to pin me down that way." ▼

Browser Beat: by Elle Thomas

http://members.tripod.com/~womens_voices/

~womens_voices/

Take the butch-femme test! A decidedly unscientific and humorous 100 question multiple-choice test to find out where you fall on the b/f continuum.

Femme: Beyond Feminine

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

Why femme/butch instead of butch/femme? I've been asked this several times about the issue theme. It's just one of those pairings, like salt and pepper, that just doesn't mean the same thing when you say pepper and salt. Suddenly you hear the distinction between the two rather than the blurring of one into the other.

I think it's also good to look at the terms in reverse order to think about the power relations of how butch and femme function in our queer culture. It is often said that you can only tell the femmes by first seeing the butches, which suggests that the femme identity always gets defined in reference to another identity and by what it is not. It also suggests that a femme can pass as a straight woman when not accompanied by a butch, though that cannot always be said of a lone butch. But if a femme doesn't want to pass, then she has to try that much harder to distinguish herself as queer. A femme is definitely a gender transgressor. Appearing as straight, she subverts the role of the feminine woman (to please a man) by using her outward expression to attract other women and to please herself. And she pisses off the straight paradigm because she's feminine enough to "have" a man but chooses to be with women (perhaps in addition to men).

To me, the terms femme/butch are terms to describe a range of behaviors and physical presentations of queer women. Not all queer women like to identify as femme or butch, and I have found that bi women particularly react against the terms, which doesn't surprise me at all. Bi people, generally, react against labels and categories of all sorts because they so often feel like they bridge or transcend them through the way they live their lives. But I also think bi women like to experiment with the wide range of possibilities along the butch/femme continuum without feeling confined by them. And that's fun to watch! And I think many people assume that because bi women are also interested in men that they all would be femmes. Oh, how wrong they are — hallelujah for butch bi women!

Femme/butch identities are not static and they are not necessarily constricting, but they can be. Femme/butch arose out of a historical context where woman to woman love was not safely or openly acknowledged. Some expressions of femme/butch (when the butch passed as a man) allowed couples to achieve a visibility in straight society without being recognized. Some expressions of it helped organize a close-knit and closeted culture into a readable social structure. (This structure, unfortunately, meant

that femme couldn't fall for femme, and butch couldn't fall for butch.) As queer people have established a safer, more visible place in the world, femme/butch have become much more fluid (and perhaps diluted) identities or presentations. But, I, for one, am glad they have not disappeared.

If I were to choose one or the other term to define myself, I would definitely choose femme (but not high femme). Why? I was a tomboy throughout my childhood, then became a feminist in my adolescence, and sort of skipped any makeup, hair, and nails stage entirely. In college, I started my sex life with men, though I also had my first deep crush on a woman. And looking back it is no surprise that she was a soft butch. And that, for me, is the key part of how I know I am more femme — I am incredibly attracted to butch women (but not masculine men). And this is where I see the magic of femme/butch. Not in the presentation of individual women, but in the interplay, the dynamics between butch and femme women. I am not saying that all woman to woman attraction has anything to do with femme/butch because I don't believe it does. But I enjoy watching, and being a part of, the sexual tension, the yin and yang, whatever you want to call it, of the femme/butch dance.

When I was only with men I was a very assertive, strong woman, something that played out with its good and bad moments in heterosexual relationships. I was never a "babe" who got into the whole "dress up and conquer" mentality. As a feminist, I believed a man had to take me as I was, underarm and leg hair and all. Also, no door holding, jar opening, chairs pulled out, etc. allowed. Fashionwise, I was very comfortable in men's shirts, vests, ties, shoes, and coats. They became an integral part of my style and I felt very sexy in them.

Once I started dating women, I found my style became much more womanly. I didn't start wearing skirts and dresses particularly, but I did wear more shape-accentuating styles and more colors. Being attracted to other strong, assertive women I felt I could express my feminine side and not have it interpreted as being weak — a more complicated maneuver in straightville. And I could expose my body more and be more sexually aggressive without it being taken advantage of, which was not my experience with some men.

Aggressive femme? Oh, yes, I see aggressive as a suitable modifier for femme. No need to hide the desire, the passion, the thrill of wanting, going after, and of receiving. ▽

Femme/Butch Bibliography



A short list of titles you may want to check out which deal with butch/femme identities in different ways.

My Gender Workbook, by Kate Bornstein

Dagger: On Butch Women, by Lily Burana, Roxxie and Linnea Due

Gender Shock: Exploding the Myths of Male and Female, by Phyllis Burke

Transgender Warriors, and Stone Butch Blues, by Leslie Feinberg

The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader, and *A Fragile Union*, by Joan Nestle

The Femme Mystique, The Little Butch Book, and Out of the Closet and Nothing to Wear, by Leslea Newman

Bisexual Anthology

Bi men, bi women, bi transgender persons are invited to share their experiences in an anthology called *Closer with Two Doors*. Topics being solicited are: being a member of the gay/lesbian community, being a member of the heterosexual community, is there a bisexual spirituality, bisexuality and monogamy. Other topics on bisexuality will be accepted. For questions or submissions, contact Meredith McGhan, ED., Ste. 15-120, 4640 Paradise Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89109.

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existing programs and collaborate on projects of interest to the community. When talking about outreach to the bi community, it's also important to be talking about people who don't identify as bi. Far many more people have sex with men, women, and transgendered people than identify as bisexual. There are also people who call themselves bisexual but aren't part of the organized community. They've never been to a bi event and aren't on the mailing lists. Outreach to those two groups of people is an important piece of this work. I also think BiHealth can be a resource for people who work in health, HIV prevention, and social service fields about bisexuality, both in Massachusetts and nationally. For the bisexual community nationally, I'd love to see this be a model for programs all over the country. The web is one of those tools for outreach and education without geographical limits. The Playing Safe With Both Teams site is now linked to many national websites.

What is your own experience with working with the bi community?

When I was a student at Brown University, I majored in Sexuality and Society and helped organized BiTE (Bisexuals Eat and Talk) there. Later, I co-founded BiProv, a bi social and support group for Rhode Islanders. BiProv taught me how quickly you can build community and help people in the coming out process by putting out your shingle: "Bisexual." You don't need a

neon sign, just a little ad in the newspaper. At Fenway, I've been able to merge my interests in bisexuality, sexuality education, and HIV prevention.

What will you be doing at the community meetings?

The community meetings are an opportunity for people to come together and discuss what they'd like to see this program accomplish. It's also a chance to start thinking about "bisexual health" as a concept. I think of health in a broad, holistic way. I think the same way about bisexual. In recent years we've seen the Gay Men's Health Summit, and the Institute of Medicine's report on lesbian health. It's time to start thinking of bisexual health in the same way.

Are you working with both bi men and bi women? Do you see these groups needing different things?

Yes, BiHealth works with bi women, men, and transgendered people. I think the needs of bisexual people are as diverse as the community. Gender, race, class, ethnicity and culture, age, ability, religion, and other factors all have an impact on health needs. Bisexuals as a group have overlapping but distinct needs. ▽

LGBT Groups Encouraged to Boycott South Carolina

The National Association of Black and White Men Together (NABWMT), the oldest national, multicultural gay organization in the U.S., passed a resolution to support the NAACP-initiated boycott of South Carolina and encourages other LGBT individuals and groups to do so as well. The boycott asks individuals and organizations to avoid traveling to, or holding meetings in South Carolina because it is the only state that still officially recognizes the Confederate battle flag.

Commenting on the endorsement, Paul Hawkins, NABWMT Recording Secretary, stated, "Much of the publicity about South Carolina has focused on how the Confederate battle flag offends African-Americans. But as a primary symbol of the false doctrine of white supremacy, the NABWMT believes the flag is also offensive to all Americans, including whites and other peoples of color. And because racism and heterosexism are both historically rooted in white supremacist doctrines, so the time has come for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans of every ethnicity to be visible in the fight to remove that flag."

Ed Brown, NABWMT Co-Chair, stated, "Supporting this boycott is [also] a way for us to build solidarity with our straight allies. We need to do more of this if our ultimate goal is to dismantle all the "isms" and ensure that everyone's rights are secured." ▽

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CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

May 2 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call 617-354-8807 for topic. See April 4th.

May 3 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See April 5th.

May 10 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. See April 12th.

May 11 ♦ Thursday

BBWN Introductory Meeting, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Learn about BBWN and what resources there are for bis in the Boston area. Cambridge Women's Center, 26 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 617-354-8807.

May 12 ♦ Friday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Bi Space: The Politics Issue." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: BiWomen, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140 or e-mail to eruthstr@mail.lesley.edu.

May 13 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Bike Ride, 10 a.m. We'll tour the Charles River and beyond. Meet at JFK park, at the corner of JFK Street and Memorial Drive. Closest T is Harvard Square on the Red Line. Expected 30+ miles. Call Sheeri at 617-629-9516 or Arthur at 617-527-1442 to RSVP and to make suggestions for where to ride.

May 16 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. (See April 5th)
Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call 617-354-8807 for topic. See April 4th.

May 17 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space. This month's topic is "Definitions and Labels." (See April 19th).

May 20 ♦ Saturday

BBWN Potluck Brunch, noon. Meet at the home of Debbie Block-Schwenk, former BBWN newsletter editor, on B train of the Green line in Brighton. Vegetarian food only, please. Cats in residence (for those with allergies, be aware). 617-782-2754 for more info.

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. A picnic brunch will coincide with the Youth Pride Day events. Meet at the top of the stairs leading to Boston Common across Beacon Street from the State House. Bring your food. Closest T is Park Street on the Red and Green lines. The March begins at 1 p.m., followed by the Youth Pride Festival at the Hatch Shell. Support our Queer Youth, march along or stand along the march route and cheer. Make sure these kids know they are not alone!

Biversity Planning Meeting, 3:00 p.m. The meeting will be at the BRC table near the Hatch Shell. Bring your great ideas for upcoming events!

Fenway Women's Dance at the Sheraton Boston Hotel benefitting Fenway's Women's Care Fund. Dinner, dancing, entertainment. \$125. Kate Clinton is this year's special guest. Call 617-267-8862 for details.

May 21 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Matinee Brunch, noonish. Let's pick a movie, probably at the Kendall Cinema, and see a matinee together. Then we'll head out for some food and do a post-modern critique of what we've seen. Or maybe we'll just socialize. Yeah, that sounds good. Contact Ellyn at 617-623-5525 for info closer to the date, but definitely by the 20th.



May 22 ♦ Monday

Serve Dinner at the Boston Living Center, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Bi community will help serve dinner to Living Center clients. The work is easy, the staff is friendly, the cause is good, and your dinner is free. Contact Wesley at 617-441-3573 or wlt@shore.net to sign up.

May 27 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Bike Ride, 10 a.m. Location has not been decided. Call Sheeri at 617-629-9516 or Arthur at 617-527-1442 to RSVP and to make suggestions for where to ride.

May 28 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch and Walk in the Arboretum, 1 p.m. Brunch will be at Doyle's at 3484 Washington St. in Jamaica Plain, between the Green Street and Forest Hills stops on the Orange Line. Walk in the Arboretum afterwards.
Bisexual People of Color Potluck Dinner, 6-8 p.m. This will be a special potluck at 'tina's place in Chelsea. Join us for a movie night (*The Wedding Banquet*) with food and snacks. See April 23rd.

May 30 ♦ Tuesday

BBWN Pre-mailing Dinner, 6 p.m. at Bertucci's on Stanhope St., just two doors down from the Bi Office.
BiWomen mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. Label, stuff, and lick. Actually the licking is *after* the mailing. Ha! Join us.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

4th Mondays:

Bi People of Color Potluck, 7-9 p.m. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. For info call 617-424-9595.

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Thursdays: The Midway Cafe, Washington Street in Jamaica Plain.

Saturdays: Lava Bar in Kenmore Square, 575 Commonwealth Ave. at the Howard Johnson's.



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The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Thursdays: Single Jewish Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Group. 6:30-8 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street. Info: 617-499-9612.

3rd Thursdays: SpeakOut Meeting. 8 p.m., at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope St., Boston. Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45 p.m., theme program starts at 8 p.m. Info: 617-354-0133.

1st & 3rd Thursdays: Bi Women's Resource & Support Group. 7 p.m. at the Women's Health Consortium, 379 State St., Portsmouth, NH. For info call 603-431-1669 or contact Sue Corcoran at schmoo@nh.ultranet.com.

CALENDAR

April 4 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Creative Sex Toys and Comfort with Sex Toys." Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

April 5 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

April 6 ♦ Thursday

Games Night at the Whimsical Bestiary, 7 p.m. Bring your own games or play ours. (Twister, Vendetta, Pictionary, etc.) E-mail Heidi at heidi@aq.org.

Drag King Slam, 7 p.m. doors open, 8-10 p.m. drag show. Sign up to strut your own butch self and get half-price admission. At the Midway Cafe, Washington St., Jamaica Plain. Featuring the amazing King Dred from New York City and El Gallo [Sandra Valls]. \$10, partial proceeds to benefit the Lesbian AIDS Project of Massachusetts (LAPM).

April 8 ♦ Saturday

Spring Fever! Dance for Women, 8 p.m. - midnight. Presented by Fever! Dance Productions and DJ Dee. \$10, cash bar, complimentary snacks. Sons of Italy Ballroom, Winchester. Info: 781-648-0722.

April 12 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. The BRC board meets monthly to work on educational programs, the bi office, the web site, the international bi organizing, fund raising, etc. All bi community members welcome to attend. The meeting is at 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

April 15 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Meet at Thornton's, 100 Peterborough Street in Boston's Fenway area. Nearest T is Fenway on the D branch of the Green Line.

April 16 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Bicycle Ride, 10 a.m. We'll do the Minute Man Trail, starting from Alewife (@20+ miles, 3+ hours). Meet at drop-off/pick-up area of Alewife T station on the Red Line. Call Sheeri at 617-629-9516 or Arthur at 617-527-1442 to RSVP or for more info.

BBWN Potluck Brunch, 11 a.m. Home of Kate and Gene in Jamaica Plain, 10 minute walk from Green Street station on the orange line. It's Palm Sunday and there will be a quiz! (She told me to put this in). Call 617-522-8085 for more info.



Telling Your Spiritual Journey Workshop, Noon-4:30 p.m. Led by Annie Goglia, storyteller. New Words Bookstore, 186 Hampshire St., Cambridge. Sliding scale \$35-60. Contact Annie at 781-646-2379 or kalamari@juno.com

April 18 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-9 p.m. See April 5th.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Discussion of the Millenium March." See April 4th.

April 19 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space, 7-9 p.m. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. Tonight's topic is "Finding Partners." A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for the space. BiSpace is held at the BRC at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston.

April 23 ♦ Sunday

Bisexual People of Color Potluck Dinner, 5-7 p.m. For the April event the theme will be "Jazz and Juice at John's in JP." You bring the juice or whatever food and beverage you want to share with other bis of color for an afternoon of socializing and fun! Use of an oven/stove will be available for those who need items to be warmed. T accessible. For info and directions call John at 617-983-8788 or e-mail at vines@eudoramail.com.

April 29 ♦ Saturday

Bayard Rustin Annual Breakfast, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Held at the JFK Library for GLBT people of color and their friends to honor the gay civil rights leader. No charge. Call 617-450-1644 for more information.

Bi2K Conference in Washington, DC. See page 3 sidebar for registration info.

Boston Quality Women's Ten Year Anniversary and Name Change Party, 8 p.m.-midnight, Sons of Italy, Winchester. \$5 admission for dancing in a smokefree environment. Call Sue at 617-484-8143 or e-mail Sue.Wedda@Sum-Tech.com or <http://go.fast.to/bqw>.

April 30 ♦ Sunday

Millenium Queer March on Washington, DC and Millenium Festival. Get your bi ass to DC if you can to be a part of the largest queer political gathering in this country since 1993. And think of the incredible scoping! See page 3 sidebar for contact info on Lesbian Avenger's buses.



April 30 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Choose from a variety of Asian food at Ma Soba. Corner of Dunster and Mt. Auburn Streets in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Nearest T is Harvard Square on the Red Line.

CALENDAR continues on page 11

Photo by Ellyn Ruthstrom



UNH students on their way down the Mall at the Millennium March on Washington April 30th.

Bi Space: The Politics Issue

We Went Marching Bi

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

I'm a joiner, an organizer, a protester, and a marcher. One of the first gifts of an ex was a bond card for me to use in case I got arrested at the various pro-choice demos I was attending at the time. Call a gathering for an issue I'm involved in and I will try to be there with appropriate placards, buttons, bullhorns, and other regalia. So, with queer rights on the agenda for the Millennium March on Washington (MMOW), I was there. Again. I went to my first national queer march in 1993 and was empowered for months after that. Seven years later, much more steeped in bi politics, I was excited to be visible and vocal and in DC with a gang of wonderful bi and lesbian friends to be a part of something important and political in an election year. I had no idea that my own community had turned its back on the march in such a way that I would feel less visible and less valued as a part of the greater queer rights movement than I did seven years ago.

Mind you, I wasn't ignorant of the controversy that had been brewing for two years. I had to figure out for myself whether I could march with a clear conscience. I read up on what had occurred in the initial organizing and I observed the follow-up attempts that were then made to expand the scope and vision of the march. I read the platform which delineated eight important points of our struggle that I could definitely support: hate crimes, job

Marching continues on page 8

Open Call for Participation

By Jennifer Collin

How has bisexuality affected my activism? It has opened my eyes. The fact that I cannot insert myself into one label or another, without lots of interesting modifiers, reminds me that no one issue exists on its own, an island untouched by other issues. Bisexuality reminds me of collaboration, coalition, union, the space that occupies the void between one pole and the other (i.e., the infinite varieties of bisexuality that fall between Kinsey 0 and Kinsey 6): No one lives at one point on the spectrum all of the time.

But, what does it mean that my bisexuality opens my eyes? How is it that my experience of bisexuality correlates with my understanding of the need for collaboration, the need for single-issue activists to recognize how their issue is affected by other issues (that, for instance, a Jewish bi woman does not simply struggle with sexism, but also with anti-Semitism, biphobia, and homophobia)?

As an anti-domestic violence activist, I was initiated into a movement that clarified for me the connection between sexism, men's upbringing in our sexist society, and domestic violence. However, as I did the work of reaching out to (mostly) battered heterosexual woman and offering what assistance I could, it became clear to me that

Open continues on page 8

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Volunteers of the Month

Gail

Robyn Ochs

Elle Thomas

Jane Kaplan

Annie Goglia

Andrea

Debbie Block-
Schwenk

Kate Griffin

Gene

Amy Wyeth



*And many more
wonderful
women! You know
who you are!
Thank you, thank
you, thank you!*

BiWomen is published
bi-monthly.

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Ellyn Ruthstrom

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recycled paper

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

It's Pride Season!

Time to dust off the placards, the tiaras, the motorcycles, the glitter make-up, and the political buttons. Our community has a wide range of ways to celebrate our High Holiday. This year the Boston celebration falls on Saturday, June 10th. The Boston bi community has a tradition of gathering together for a Pride morning brunch to get excited for the march down Boylston Street. This year the tradition continues (see the sidebar on page 3 for details), and we hope you will join us that morning. After my recent experience of feeling fairly invisible at the Millennium March in DC (see page 1), I'm certainly looking forward to taking to the streets with the vibrant bi community. And remember, "We put the 'B' in LGBT!"

I want to send out a huge body hug to Elle Thomas who many of you may know only by reading this newsletter. She has been a great asset to the BBWN community. Elle has been an important part of the revitalization of the Tuesday Bi Rap at the Cambridge Women's Center, the newsletter mailing diva, and a reliable writer of articles for the newsletter. She is taking to the road (see page 4) in search of adventures and of new connections. We all wish her well on her journey and hope that she will come back for visits (and that she'll keep writing for us!). Cheers, Elle! ▼



One of my favorite sights at the March. Both of the backs of the t-shirts read, "And She's Single."

Next in *Bi Women*:

The *BiWomen* theme for
August/September is:

Body Image

What do you think about your bi body? Has your relationship with your body changed over the course of your life? Since you have come out? How do you present yourself to the world?

DEADLINE: July 7, 2000

Future Issues in 2000:

October/November:

Bicultural, Biracial, Bisexual

December/January

Bi Youth



Please Submit to
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Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news, and views to:

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Bi2K: Activism for a New Millennium

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

Saturday morning I found my way to the Jewish Community Center near Dupont Circle for Bi2K: Activism for a New Millennium. The morning session was devoted to a panel discussing various elements of local activism. Deb Kolody, a BiNet advisory board member, spoke about her own current organizing as an out bi woman in predominantly straight progressive groups. She encouraged others to make more bridges to straight organizations, not just other queer ones, to broaden the ally base and increase progressive coalitions. She also emphasized the ongoing need for local bi groups to empower bis in our own distinctive identity.

Tom Limoncelli entertained the audience with his great sense of humor along with his activist concerns. He mentioned that New Jersey has a civil union bill on the legislative agenda similar to the newly passed Vermont one; however, it is bi-inclusive, unlike Vermont. Tom also discussed how important education about bisexuality is — reaching other bis, straight people, and gays and lesbians. Visibility is always an issue and Tom encouraged use of buttons, bumper stickers, and T-shirts, as well as displaying the beautiful bi flag. He also stressed that organizing and activism have a natural ebb and flow; people get charged up and then the energy may lag, but it comes back and endurance is key.

BBWN's Robyn Ochs talked briefly about Boston's own bi activist history and her own search and discovery of bi women's community in the early eighties. She stressed that people need to organize for themselves, and for what they are looking for. If you want a support group at your local women's center then do it. If it's important to you then that's enough, others will find you. Whatever you do accomplish, make sure people know about it. Robyn joked that "smoke and mirrors" can really be useful for getting media attention; use press

releases, etc. to get the exposure.

There was a good opportunity for the conference participants to ask questions and talk to each other before the session broke up



Boston BBWN members who attended Bi2K in Washington, DC on April 29th. Annie Goglia, Robyn Ochs, Ellyn Ruthstrom, and [redacted]

for a working lunch. Each lunch table had an issue to focus their discussion on and most tables seemed to have very lively conversations going on.

After lunch, there were three concurrent workshops — Building Conscious Spiritual Communities, Nonviolent Street Protests 101, and Homemade Activism.

The conference was smaller than I had expected, but I guess it was the first indication that bis were not in attendance in DC for this national march and rally. (See page 1 for article on the March.) As always, it was good to meet new people and share information about our various communities.

Boston Bi Pride



Come on out with your buttons and your t-shirts and your bare breasts if you so choose! It is time for Pride with a capital P, and in the Boston bi community that starts on Saturday morning at the annual BBWN sponsored Pre-Pride Bi Brunch at the Community Church on Copley Square. The Bi Brunch is a great place to see old friends, make new ones, have some good food, and get psyched for the march. We ask for a \$5-10 sliding scale donation to cover the costs and hopefully make a little for the BBWN treasury. If you are interested in helping volunteer to set up, staff the door, buy and prepare the food, or clean up, please contact Ellyn at 617-623-5535 or eruthstr@mail.lesley.edu.

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Best Transgender Erotica

From ancient mythology to the present day, genderplay, gender and sexual transgression, and different ways of doing/expressing gender and sex have been grounds for hot fantasy, sizzling eroticism, and awesome sex. Editors Hanne Blank and Raven Brangwyn Kaldera, are seeking erotica for an anthology that transgresses conventional boundaries of sex and gender, that smashes the walls of what gender has to do with sexuality, that explodes preexisting notions of what it means to be sexual, and opens new horizons for what being sexual can mean. All genders, all genres, and all writing styles (as long as they're prose and fictional) will be considered. 1500-7000 words. Previously published is fine, no simultaneous submissions. Detailed submissions guidelines, including e-mail submissions guidelines and format, are available at <http://www.hanne.net/anthology>. Deadline: September 15, 2000.

Bi Space = Inclusive Space

By Elle Thomas

My long-time hairdresser recently noticed my ankle tattoo. "I know that's a woman symbol, but why is it inside a triangle?" *The triangle signifies queer.* "Oh, you are? So that's why you aren't married anymore."

Actually, no. I didn't use the word *lesbian* for a reason, but how do I correct this assumption by straight acquaintances who are open-minded but ill-informed? Few people in metro-Boston have an issue with gays and lesbians, at least not openly and not the straight people I know and meet. But how do I convey that there is a category called bisexual; that being queer is not the reason I am divorced; that being bi doesn't mean I'm a nymphomaniac who'll do anything that moves, but rather that I am attracted to certain individuals and their gender simply isn't an issue?

I seek out bi space because it's where I can interact without feeling like the bisexual ambassador, slaying an endless slew of misconceptions with the patient handholding of a matronly kindergarten teacher. Of course, as the facilitator for BiRap at The Women's Center, I never completely take off that educator's hat. For women just coming out or still questioning, I am an example of a bisexual, a resource for what and who we are. Obviously I derive pleasure from playing this role, or I wouldn't do it. I have been involved with mentoring and volunteerism for more than half of my life. I co-founded a peer support drop-in group my freshman year of high school, later expanding it to include a weekday after-school telephone hotline. In college, I worked in the Homeless Empowerment Project (from which the newspaper *Spare Change* evolved), in an AIDS hospice, and in the oncology wing of Children's Hospital. In 1995, after the death of a nine-year-old with whom I had formed a deep emotional attachment, I put my volunteer energy elsewhere.

Then, late in 1998, I was asked to lead BiRap. I immediately remembered why I had been involved with that work from age 15 to 25. I feel comfortable in front of a group. I feel good about myself when something I do or say helps to put someone else at ease, or helps them find the resources to manage a difficult situation. I'm temperamentally

suited to facilitation. I'm fairly accomplished at supportive objectivity. It's a running joke with my friends that I'm a Boy Scout, because of my desire to be helpful, trustworthy, and kind. So while there are certainly days when I feel less inclined to be responsible for educating others and just want to be alone, it's an essential part of my character, and to be happy, I must have an outlet for it.

In my short (three-year) experience as a bisexual, I have encountered two misconceptions of bisexuality that particularly raise my hackles. In a newsletter produced by a bisexual organization, I realize this is preaching to the choir; but their existence is a large factor in why bi space is so important to me, so I would like to mention them.



Photo by Eilyn Ruthstrom

Beautiful rainbow women who cheered marchers on from the sidelines.

✓ **Bisexuals are polyamorous** (i.e., sluts). Sexual identity is a separate issue from sexual practice. Quite a few folks who are polyamorous are straight; a menage-a-trios of females does not denote bisexual behavior. Poly and bi are not interchangeable terms. Yes, some of us are openly polyamorous. Others are serial monogamists. Still others identify as monogamous but have affairs. No single bedroom behavior defines us. We have a range, just as the straight world does.

✓ **There is no such thing as bisexuality.** Some

people disbelieve or say nasty things about our two-spirit nature. These include that we are really lesbians but find straight privilege too convenient to give up; that we will invariably leave a woman when a good man comes along; that we get a kinky thrill from female dalliances but our hearts are not open to loving and committing to women; that we are indecisive fencesitters; and that we are responsible for bringing AIDS into the lesbian community.

And then there are the men who want to go out with us only because elaborate threesome fantasies dance in their heads, and who will drop us quickly if we aren't interested in group sex. Unfortunately, intolerance is not the exclusive territory of religious fanatics. Some people just refuse to see the world in shades of gray. The ignorant can be educated but the righteous rarely stop being insecure xenophobes. The best course of action is to intelligently engage the former and steer clear of the latter.

There are other important issues that affect us, ones which we fight not with the general public but with ourselves. One is the incestuousness of the bi community. The bi world is tiny, a subset of the substantial-but-not-huge lesbian community. If we spend time in lesbian clubs or other woman-dominated places, we realize the smallness of our number. When people date and then break up, often friends are caught in the middle, asked by one or both to choose a side. When both are bisexual, it can be particularly difficult to map out safe space, because there are a limited number of support groups for bisexuals, and each woman needs comfort and room to heal.

But there are more of us than that mini-lesbian-circle would suggest, because bis are also a subset of the straight world. And because these two camps are each larger than our own, many of us seek out bi-only space to discuss issues that monosexuals can't fathom, like how to maintain bi identity and bi visibility in a monogamous relationship; topics that interest us, like bisexuality as a phase and as long-time identity, or dealing with mates who insist they are comfortable with our bi-ness but whose actions or remarks give us doubt; and those universal predicaments that get more complex within such a small group, like being comfortable traveling in the same social and support circles as ex-lovers.

BiRap, with its bi space, offers something pretty hard to find in this culture — a place to be vocal and honest without fear of judgment or rejection. And that openness is not reserved solely for sexuality. Many bisexuals embrace non-traditional attitudes in several other areas of their lives. Some women who do not self-identify as bisexual enjoy dropping into our meetings from time to time because of this

openness. The polyamorous, the celibate, pagans, atheists and transgendered are all welcome in BiRap. Certainly it is possible that some individuals who come to the group for their first meeting will be naïve, ignorant, phobic or just plain afraid. However, any stereotypes, generalizations, or negative remarks are quickly questioned by others in the room, so even when those present don't depict a rainbow of perspectives, the atmosphere is generally one of respect, diversity and inclusiveness. In a way, it's my personal utopia — a room full of interesting people participating in no-holds-barred, enlightening discussions, often with many smiles and much laughter.

In a few weeks, I will be moving away from Boston after living here for twelve years. Boston is a great city to live in as a bisexual. It is where I came out, and found an abundance of support at my most vulnerable time. My confidence in and comfort with myself exists in part because of the strength of the bi community here. This summer I will be traveling around the country on Greyhound buses. When autumn arrives, I will either continue the vagabond life, or set up a home in a community out west, only returning to Boston to visit. I have been told I will love Colorado and the Rocky Mountains; I am eager to see the deserts and canyonlands of the southwest again. But I'm leaving the location of my next home for the spirits to decide.

Wherever my travels take me, things will look different, and I will miss this space and the people I have come to know here. Finding positive bi space will be one of my highest priorities when evaluating a new place to settle. I am pretty certain that if I find a geographic environment that feels welcoming, I'll find bisexuals there too, because BBWN and BiRap have shown me that we aren't as uncommon as I once surmised. And if there isn't already a visible bi community in that place, don't be surprised if I bring one out. ➤

Bi Health Educator Training

On Saturday, June 3, from 10:00 to 3:30 p.m. Bi Health is sponsoring their first health educator training at Fenway Community Health in Room 201, 7 Haviland St., Boston. Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the training is an opportunity to learn about educating others on bisexuality and HIV and STD prevention issues. E-mail mmiller@fenwayhealth.org or call 617-927-6032 to RSVP today or for more information. People who complete this training will have the option of becoming an educator for the Bi Health program. As an educator, you can receive free condoms, female condoms, and dental dams to distribute at parties and social events you attend. You also have the possibility of receiving a paid stipend to do outreach about bisexuality at clubs, bars, and other venues. If you attend the training, there's no obligation to do outreach. People of all sexual orientations are welcome.

Browser Beat: by Elle Thomas

www.madre.org

MADRE is an international women's human rights organization that works in partnership with women's community-based groups worldwide to address issues of health, economic development and other human rights. Founded in 1983 by a group of women in response to the U.S.-sponsored Contra war in Nicaragua, MADRE programs include education, international campaigns, community training and emergency material aid.

Jewish Queer
Conference:
Horizons 2000

The World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Jewish Organizations and New Jersey's Lesbian and Gay Havurah are co-hosting Horizons 2000, the 16th World Conference of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews. Horizons will take place July 27-30, at the Hilton Woodcliff Lake in New Jersey. The broad theme of the conference, Horizons, speaks to the turn of the century, the convergence of diverse identities, the light of Shabbat, the pull of the shore, and the promise of the future. For more information; call: 1-732-650-1010, or write to: Horizons 2000, P.O. Box 2576, Edison, NJ 08818-2576, or send e-mail to: conf@njhav.org, or visit the conference web page at <http://www.njhav.org>.

Bisexual Etiquette: *Helpful hints for bisexuals working with lesbians and gay men*

By Robyn Ochs

I have recently celebrated my eighteenth anniversary as a bisexual activist. Much of my activism has taken place in the context of the Boston area GLBT community. In most of the lesbian and gay groups I have been involved with, I have been one of two or three out bisexuals. During my decade of activism I have learned a great deal, both from my own mistakes, and from other people's. I have said and done things which I have instantly and thoroughly regretted, and experienced moments of proud accomplishment. At times I have felt like a supplicant, a second class citizen, a token, a nuisance; at other times an equal, a leader, a decorated veteran, a sister.

What follows are a few suggestions I would like to pass along to other bisexual people who are involved in GLBT communities.

Respect other people's identities.

Don't say that "everyone's really bisexual." Don't say that bisexual people are somehow more evolved. Think of how frustrated you feel when you hear someone tell you that there is no such thing as a bisexual, or that bisexuals are really lesbians or gay men in transition, or that we are really heterosexual tourists out for sexual adventure at the expense of lesbians and gay men.

Don't raise your own self-image at the expense of other people.

Examples of *bad* ideas taken from real life: a t-shirt that says "Monosexuals bore me;" a button that says "Gay is good but bi is best." Please.

Avoid the trap of weighing and measuring oppression.

Avoid thinking of oppression and liberation as a zero sum game. There is, unfortunately, plenty of oppression to go around. Fortunately, there is also enough liberation to go around.

Don't say that bisexuals are more oppressed than lesbians or gay men. We are all oppressed. Oppression hurts. Each of us experiences oppression differently. A married bisexual experiences homophobia differently from a bisexual in a same gender relationship. Out people experience

oppression differently than closeted people. Some people are members of more than one oppressed group, and as such have their own unique experience of oppression. And bisexual men have an experience that is different from bisexual women. It's OK to have a different experience of oppression. Oppression, no matter how it manifests, still hurts, and we have a common interest in working together to end it.

Respect separate space.

There is a time when coalition building is in order, and a time when we need to get together in our own identity groups to do our own empowerment work. All members of oppressed groups have the right to take space when they feel it necessary, and we need to respect that. The difficulty, of course, lies in determining when separate space is appropriate and when it is not.

My own personal belief is that any event in which lesbians and gay men get together is already by definition a coalition event. And I believe that I, as a woman-centered bisexual feminist, have a lot more in common with most lesbians than do many gay men.

However, when an event is explicitly a gay male or lesbian only event, we need to respect other people's space. (I want to make a distinction here between a lesbian event — an event that is by lesbians, or primarily for lesbians — and a lesbian-only event. I am speaking of the latter.) This is a bit more complicated than it may seem, but I have developed a personal guide for my own use, and I'll give a couple of examples of its application.

In Boston, some years ago, there was a group called Dyke Dialogue, organized by Val Seabrook, a wonderful African American lesbian. A few lesbians who regularly attended the group complained that the group should be open to lesbians only. In this instance, to determine whether my presence would be appropriate, I asked Val, the group's founder and organizer. She told me that the group was for all women, and that bisexual and transgender women were welcome. In this situation, I believe it was totally appropriate for bisexual women to participate. Any lesbians unhappy with the group's composition were free to remove themselves and start their own, exclusive group.

My second example concerns a bisexually-identified woman active in her local lesbian community who was looking for support as a



This marcher made sure there was some bi humor present at the MMOW.

queer parent. The only parents' group listed in her local newspaper was a lesbian mothers' group. She called the contact person for the group and asked whether bisexual women were welcome, and was told that they were not. Disappointed, but respecting the organizers' wishes, she resolved to try to start a second group for lesbian and bisexual moms.

In short, communicate. This indicates to others that you are respectful of their existing concerns and space, and that you want to join, not invade. Additionally, you may in the process acquire some allies. But one thing is certain: lesbians and gay men need to feel that there are places and times when their space will remain inviolate. There do need to be limits to inclusion, and inclusionary politics and separate space can exist simultaneously.

Be a good citizen.

Don't insist on being included in a given group unless you are willing to put your energy into that group. While bisexual women and men have been active in the lesbian and gay community from the start, remember that few of us have been publicly identifiable as bisexual. Most of us have simply done the work, attended the events, and not corrected people's misassumptions about how we identify. I can think of dozens of rallies and pride marches I have attended, along with other bisexual activists, only to read in the gay or straight press that "hundreds of gay men and lesbians rallied..." This invisibility has allowed many lesbians and gay men to assume that there have been few, if any, bisexual people in the movement. (Sounds a lot like the perceptions of heterosexuals about GLBT people, doesn't it?) Therefore, when we join a group as out bisexuals and begin asking for explicit recognition -as bisexuals-, many people have the impression that bisexuals have suddenly appeared out of nowhere and are trying to muscle and whine our way into "their" movement, riding on the coattails of "their" hard-fought battles. Remember this when you enter a new group. Be a good citizen. If you want to be recognized as part of the community, don't just show up and tell "them" what to do. Join the group. Show your commitment as an out bisexual. Then express your concerns.

Choose your battles.

This has been a hard one for me personally. Is it *always* important to have every sentence end with "and bisexual"? Is it important to point this omission out every time? Sometimes it may be more constructive to just be your wonderful, out bisexual self.



Photo by Ellyn Ruthstrom

A visible and stylish bi couple marching at the MMOW on April 30th.

Listen.

Rather than always being on the defensive, I have been trying hard to listen to the fears, concerns and perspectives of my lesbian and gay male friends. I've been surprised at how much I learn when I stop defending myself long enough to listen well.

Remember.

Underneath it all, we all want the same things. We want respect. We want understanding. We want to be listened to, and to be acknowledged. We want to feel safe. Accord others the same respect which you are demanding for yourself. ▼

An earlier version of this essay appeared in *Bisexual Politics*, Naomi Tucker, ed. (Haworth, 1995). Reprinted by permission of the author.

The Boston women's social organization, Boston Quality Women, (BQW) recently changed their name to **Women Out With Women (WoWW)**.

The group sponsors softball games, dances, brunches, and other activities. Contact WoWW at P.O. Box 1051, Watertown, MA 02471 or call Sue W. at 617-484-8143 or e-mail sue.wedda@sum-tech.com. ▼

Transfeminism: An Anthology

A multicultural anthology integrating feminism with lived experiences of intersex and trans people is seeking submissions.

Transfeminism will give voice to those who stand in the gap created by common hostility between some members of feminist and trans movements and call attention to the existence of feminists with intersex or trans identities. Accepted contributions will explore ways in which synthesizing trans, intersex, and feminist thinking and experiences can help overcome those barriers to ending sex- and gender-based oppressions. Writings that speak to the realities of complex lives, and insights from people who are members in more than one community are particularly valued. Send a short proposal/abstract or a manuscript by December 1, 2000. Proposals that are selected by the editors will be due February 1, 2001. Please send the material as an e-mail attachment to anthology@transfeminism.org or to Emi Koyama, Transfeminist Anthology Project, P.O. Box 40570, Portland, OR 97210-0570. Include a floppy disk with postal mail submissions. Web Site: <http://www.transfeminism.org/>.

Agents Of Social Change Conference

The Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, announces a September 22-23, 2000 conference, "Agents Of Social Change: Celebrating Women's Progressive Activism Across The Twentieth Century." The conference marks the opening for research of eight major manuscript collections of women activists. Several of the activists themselves will join third-wave feminists, processing archivists and scholars in exploring the research potential and historical significance of these collections. Taken together, the collections highlight women's part in the multiple struggles for social change that span the century - labor, socialism, peace, civil liberties, civil rights, as well as women's rights. Scholars in search of research topics are especially encouraged to attend. There are a few graduate student travel stipends available. To receive more information and registration materials (available late May), contact conference coordinator Joyce Follet at jfollet@ais.smith.edu.

Open from page 1

these women were not just battling sexism. They were also battling racism, classism, an oppressive capitalist system, and many, many other forms of oppression. It would be useless for the domestic violence movement to focus only on eradicating sexism: as a form of oppression, sexism is inexorably linked to other instances of oppression, all of which work together to keep some on top of the heap, while the majority are trapped at the bottom.

Each instance of oppression manifests in unique ways, and presents those it targets specifically with unique problems. It is important for activists to have an awareness of this, an awareness of how various forms of oppression work against all people, so as to have an activism that is comprehensive and collaborative. For instance, I will show up at your march to take back the night and raise my voice against violence against women, and I will ask that you include in your program for the evening some information about women who are battered by other women, they need not assume that a woman battered by another woman is necessarily a lesbian, and talk about how homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia have ties to sexism.

I believe that my experience of bisexuality has opened my mind, made it easier for me to see the reality of these connections, even made it seem obvious that, as an activist, one could not focus all of one's attentions on a single issue to the exclusion of others. I do not focus my desire in a single location: I could not even if I tried (and believe me, I've tried). So, too, have I tried to focus my activism in a single direction. But other issues kept popping up: why might a black woman refrain from calling the police on her batterer? why weren't women battered by women or men battered by men calling the agency I worked for? what could I say to women who called and were just looking for money, because their husbands had been arrested and they couldn't get a job? I kept hearing these few voices around the edges of our movement (sort of like those voices of bi activists who keep calling out to gay and lesbian "leadership") who said, "if we are not working to end all oppression, if we are not looking at how all the forms of oppression are intertwined, then it is likely that we are actively participating in the oppression we say we're working against."

The experience of bisexuality, for me, brought me out of the box that this society put around sexuality and desire, the box called "one or the other only." Stepping out of that box not only allows for a wider experience of desire, it also allows for a better understand-

ing of the spectrum of interconnections between "your" issue and "mine," and all of the various possibilities for collaboration. And only through collaboration, through relationships, can we, you and I and her and him together, change the world. ▽

March from page 1

discrimination, GLBT family issues, racial injustice, queer health issues, youth and aging issues, the right to privacy, and the right to serve. Yes, our ways of approaching these issues can vary tremendously and I wouldn't want to give a blanket approval to all statements of the MMOW organizers. However, I also thought for myself, do I need to march in DC during an election year? Can I sit home and let others do that for me? As usual, I decided to do my own work.

BiNet USA, the largest national political network of bisexuals, on the other hand, took a stand at their November 1998 Leadership Retreat and did not change it by April 2000. They stated, "Through a process of consensus among its leadership, BiNet USA maintains its stand to neither endorse nor oppose the Millennium March on Washington. BiNet USA leaders have not seen significant changes to the decision-making processes nor to the platform of the march. BiNet USA supports the efforts of the Ad Hoc Committee for an Open Process and believes there is a need for Bi visibility and education regarding this event. However, the organization does not have the bandwidth to dedicate resources to such efforts. Volunteers who wish to organize educational actions regarding the concerns will be supported." The Bi2K conference was to be such an educational action (see page 3).

On the morning of April 30th, the excitement grew as our band of women made its way through the Metro and down to the Mall, converging with thousands of others as we headed to the same destination. My group staked out a corner near the very beginning of the march, right beside the "Freaks Are Family" contingent. I had found out about this demo the day before at the conference and thought it sad that the only organized bi presence was a reaction against the march. Maybe I'm just getting too old for this. I'm not a freak, and neither are any of the people I saw in that group: we all have a place in the queer movement.

Most of the folks at home watching the news that night or C-SPAN that day will never know that there was a dispute between factions of the queer movement. They won't know who refused to speak, who refused to march, and sadly, won't have heard a bi perspective at all. In '93 it was a great feeling listening to Lani

Ka'ahumanu speaking from the podium. She claimed our space for us and her words entreated us to keep working at being visible. With no out bi political speaker this time (Kathy Najimy spoke, but not as an out bi spokesperson, more as an ally) it felt like we were stepping back onto the sidelines.

By far the strongest speaker of the afternoon for me was Keith Boykin, Executive Director of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum, who brought his ambivalence about the organizers and march with him to the podium and expressed his frustration and anger poetically. In between the stanzas, he read the names of people of color, both queer and straight, to honor their lives and in a very real way bring them and their struggles into our presence. Space does not permit *BiWomen* to print the entire speech in these pages, but I did ask Keith's permission to print a few sections of it in the hope you can get a taste of his eloquence and passion.

I Speak as a member of the family
because there are problems in the family
that cannot be healed
by sweeping them under the sterilized,
sanitized rug
of homogenized homosexuality...

I Speak To Resist
the commercialization
and commodification
of a mainstream "gay lifestyle"
that enriches a privileged few
and impoverishes the masses
with a bankrupt culture of uniformity...

I Speak So that
my silence will not be interpreted as complicity,
my concerns not discarded dismissively,
and my thoughts not represented simplistically...

I Speak because
my sheroes and heroes
and other good people of conscience
have chosen not to speak...

I Speak So that
the presence of people of color
will not be tokenized
and the absence of people of color
will not be trivialized...

I Speak so that black leaders
will not forget us
and gay leaders
will finally learn to work with us...

I Speak Because
we must broaden the movement
to see the intersection of

race, gender, class, religion, sexuality, and ethnicity

I Speak not to get
my place at the table
but to demand a whole new table arrange-
ment
that welcomes all those who have been
excluded...

These words booming across the expanse of the Mall were what we all needed to hear – and I wish there had been more speakers who had laid it on the line. For those of us who had gone to be visible and not just blend into the MMOW politics, Keith's words buoyed us. Ellen and Anne, Melissa and Julie didn't do it for me. They are lovely cover girls for what they do, but we've already heard from them. (An aside about Anne Heche. She now refers to her experience as "turning gay." I have tried to have sympathy for this woman as she went through her early attempts at explaining her feelings and going through her coming out process in the glare of Hollywood, but I find "turning gay" to be downright offensive on a lot of fronts.)

On the whole, the experience of my second national queer march was disappointing. The only other highlight was seeing the incredible optimism and openness and pride of the young people who marched. They came from all over the country and they were happy to be a part of something so huge. They were funky and celebratory and edgy, the way I used to think of the queer movement generally. Times change. ▼

BiNet USA is a national network of bisexual people working for the equal rights and liberation of bisexuals, to eradicate all forms of oppression, to serve as a clearinghouse for information regarding bisexuality and to facilitate bisexual community and visibility. BiNet USA works on a consensus-based model of decision making. BiNet USA, 4201 Wilson Blvd, #110-311, Arlington, VA 22203-1859, www.BiNetUSA.org, BiNet@BiNetUSA.org, 202-986-7186.

Indigo After Dark

Indigo After Dark is a collection of African-American romantic erotica (books and short story collections) for women by women. Contact: Dianne Miller, Erotica Acquisitions Editor, Genesis Press, Inc., 315 Third Avenue North Columbus, MS 39701. E-mail: diannem@genesispress.com, www.erotica-readers.com.

Love Shook My Heart II

Jess Wells seeks well-crafted stories of lesbian love, near-love, wrong love, great love, as well as heartfelt and literary love. Women of color and first-time writers encouraged, veterans honored. Contact: Jess Wells, Editor, 93 Sequoia Way, San Francisco, CA 94127, www.alyson.com. Deadline: August 31, 2000.



(L to R) Rev. Irene Monroe, Melissa Etheridge, and Julie Cypher carrying the MMOW banner at the front of the march on April 30th.

Photo by Natalie Rivkin

BiZone Sponsors Regional Leadership Retreat

BiZone (formerly BiNet/NJ) is hosting its first ever Bisexual Leadership Retreat for bisexual leaders in the NJ, NY, CT and greater Philadelphia area July 20-23 in Marlboro, New Jersey. The retreat will be 4 days and 3 nights with intensive skill-building workshops by day and social/networking events at night. Designed for those who wish to increase their leadership skills especially where it will benefit the bi community. Space is available for only 25 attendees. Registration is on an altered first-come, first-served basis, modified to meet diversity balance. Registration is only \$50 (co-ed, dorm-style accommodations), all meals, workshops and socials. We expect to be filled by May 31; all participants should be notified by June 7. For more info and to register: <http://www.BiZone.org/retreat2000> or e-mail: retreat2000@p or call: 732/246-3769 or write: BiZone, c/o Pride Center NJ, PO Box 1431, New Brunswick NJ 08903.

Tell Beth: Bi Life is Good!

By Lynn Rosenbaum

A cceptance of bisexuality continues to increase, however, the main stream still focuses on how bisexuality necessarily leads to a life of hardship and discrimination. Rarely do we hear about the benefits of being bisexual (except that we supposedly get more dates — Ha!)

In the "Ask Beth" sex information column in *The Boston Globe* on April 20, a bisexual male wondered if he is setting himself up for trouble by being bisexual. "Beth" commendably affirms his bisexual feelings, but isn't very encouraging about his choosing a bisexual identity. What a shame that more people don't know about the hidden joys of being an open bisexual. This was my response.

Dear Beth,

In response to the bisexual male who wondered if bisexuality leads to a life of hardship, there is another possibility. Being bisexual can enrich your life!

As a bisexual woman, I have been able to tap into a wonderful community of bisexuals and others who don't want to live their lives in narrow categories. Being openly bisexual has brought me friendships, support, community, and activism. Please check out the Bisexual Resource Center in Boston (617-424-9595) for a wide array of groups and events for bisexual men and women and their allies. ▼

Happy to be bisexual,
Lynn Rosenbaum

The Relief Map of Boston

H ave you ever had trouble finding a safe bathroom because of your gender presentation? Every day, transgendered and other gender variant people risk arrest and injury while trying to find a safe place to go. **NO ONE SHOULD BE AFRAID TO GO TO THE BATHROOM.** The Radical Gender Project is making a list of all the gender safe public restrooms in the Boston area, called The Relief Map Of Boston. If you know of a public restroom that is safe for gender variant people (like a bathroom that is non-gender specific, or a family restroom) e-mail stacey at "sheerchaos@aol.com" or phone: 617-524-1063. ▼



Letters to the Editor

Dear BBWN,

I am one of the primary organizers of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network and as a sister organization I wanted to extend a congratulations on a newsletter well done. We trade newsletters with you group and each time it arrives it is passed around and devoured. I decided it was time to get my own subscription because I wanted to make sure I actually got my hands on the newsletter when it is published. Keep up the great work and please start my personal subscription immediately. ▼

Diana

Dear BBWN,

Thank you for producing this newsletter. I want to support it with a donation. I want it to continue to be dropped off at the Women's Center and New Words Books (possibly at Cambridge Center for Adult Education and Boston Center for Adult Education as well?). I admire so much the thoughtful writing and array of topics touched on. This bloom is truly one of Boston's flowers. ▼

Thank you,
Heidi

Athena's by K.C.

Home Parties for women featuring high quality lotions, massage products, and bedroom toys.



Call or E-mail Karen
Tel (617) 816-TOYS
E-mail athenasbykc@aol.com

CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

Bisexual People of Color Potluck Dinner, 5-7 p.m. Join us at a member's place in Porter Square for an afternoon of Spanish music, socializing and fun Flamenco style. Bring a dish or a beverage to share. For more info call Alan at 617-868-0288.

June 26 ♦ Monday

Serve Dinner at the Boston Living Center, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Bi community will help serve dinner to Living Center clients. The work is easy, the staff is friendly, the cause is good, and your dinner is free. Contact Wesley at 617-441-3573 or wlt@shore.net to sign up.

June 28 ♦ Wednesday

Miniature Golf, 7:30 p.m. Several people have requested it. John and Joan have organized it. We'll be playing miniature golf at McGolf, located at 150 Bridge St., Route 109, in Dedham (between Route 1 (VFW Parkway) and Route 128). RSVP to John at gojon54@hotmail.com by June 21st so we can get a head count for the reservation (or if you can offer rides).



July 5 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See June 20th.

July 7 ♦ Friday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Body Image." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140 or e-mail to eruthstr@mail.lesley.edu.

July 8 ♦ Saturday

Naturist Swimming Trip at The Ledges, 9 a.m. We'll be car-pooling to The Ledges clothing-optional swimming site in southern Vermont. Meet at the bi office at 29 Stanhope Street in Boston. Nearest T stop is Back Bay on the Orange Line. Bring a towel, something to eat, and sun-screen.

July 12 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. See June 14th.

July 13 ♦ Thursday

BBWN Introductory Meeting, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Learn about BBWN and what resources there are for bis in the Boston area. Cambridge Women's Center, 26 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 617-354-8807.

July 15 ♦ Saturday

BBWN Potluck Brunch, noon. Meet at the home of Debbie Block-Schwenk, former BBWN newsletter editor, on B train of the Green line in Brighton. Vegetarian



food only, please. Cats in residence (for those with allergies, be aware). 617-782-2754 for more info.

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. It's our annual summer brunch outing to Au Bon Pain in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line. Biversity Planning meeting will take place in the restaurant right after the brunch.

July 18 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See June 20th.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call 617-354-8807 for topic. See June 6th.

July 19 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space, 7-9 p.m. See June 21st.

July 23 ♦ Sunday

Bisexual People of Color Picnic, 3 p.m. Join us for a picnic along the Charles River Walkway. We'll meet in front of the CVS across the street from the Charles/MGH stop of the Red line at 3:00 and we'll walk over to a nice spot along the river. Bring a frisbee or whatever you think would be fun.

July 25 ♦ Tuesday

BBWN Pre-mailing Dinner, 6 p.m. at Bertucci's on Stanhope St., just two doors down from the Bi Office.

BiWomen mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office at 29 Stanhope St. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Join us. Socialize during and after.



July 21 ♦ Sunday

Sunday Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Enjoy delicious vegetarian food at Buddha's Delight in Boston's Chinatown. On Beach Street between Harrison and Washington. Nearest T stop is Chinatown on the Orange Line.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

4th Mondays: Bi People of Color Potluck, 7-9 p.m. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. For info call 617-424-9595.

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Thursdays: The Midway Cafe, 3496 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain.

Saturdays: Lava Bar in Kenmore Square, 575 Commonwealth Ave. at the Howard Johnson's.

**BiWomen
wants
you!!!**



SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for *BiWomen*
(sliding scale)

___ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)

___ \$20-\$30 (suggested)

___ \$30-\$100

___ Renewal

___ New Subscriber

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE (Optional) _____

BBWN, P.O. BOX 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd

Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

3rd Thursdays:

SpeakOut Meeting. 8 p.m., at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope St., Boston. Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45 p.m., theme program starts at 8 p.m. Info: 617-354-0133.

1st & 3rd

Thursdays:

Bi Women's Resource & Support Group. 7 p.m. at the Women's Health Consortium, 379 State St., Portsmouth, NH. For info call 603-431-1669 or contact Sue Corcoran at schmoo@nh.ultranet.com.

CALENDAR

June 3 ♦ Saturday

Bi Health Educator Training at Fenway Community Health Center, see sidebar on page 5 for details.

June 6 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Women/Bis in Sports." Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

June 7 ♦ Wednesday

Best Bisexual Erotica reading, 6 p.m. Come support local bi writers as they share their work from this brand new collection of erotic writings. New Words Bookstore, 186 Hampshire St. in Cambridge.



June 10 ♦ Saturday

Bi Pride Brunch, 9-11:30 a.m. BBWN will host the annual Bi Pre-Pride Brunch. The price is \$5-10 sliding scale. At the Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston St., 3rd floor. Nearest T stop is Copley on the Green Line. Fabulous bi T-shirts, buttons, and jewelry will be available, along with some good food to get ready to march. Then join the bi contingent and march off at noon for the Boston Common. When you reach the Common make sure you stop by and visit the Bisexual Resource Center table.

June Schedule for The Theatre Offensive

BBWN will be organizing an outing to see one of these performances. The Theatre Offensive may even have a "Bi Night" for us. If you are interested in going, please call Ellyn at 617-623-5535.

All performances are at the Boston Center for the Arts, Black Box Theater, 539 Tremont St. in Boston. 617-426-5336, e-mail: offensiv@tiac.net, www.thetheatereffensive.org

June 8-24, 2000. Abe Rybeck & Noelia Ortiz Cortés in *Immaculate Infection*, directed by Brenda Cotto Escalera. How can a spicy Latina housewife and cranky Jewish diva cure AIDS? It might take more than chicken recipes. Thursdays & Fridays @ 8 p.m.; Saturdays @ 10 p.m.

June 8-24, 2000. Renita Martin in *Five Bottles in a Six Pack*, directed by Daniel Alexander Jones. In the face of everyday racism and misogyny, wouldn't it make perfect sense to be, well, mad?! Downright hilarious, deeply terrifying and too damn familiar. Fridays @ 10 p.m.; Saturdays @ 8 pm; Sundays @ 7 p.m.

June 8-24, 2000. NEA/TCG Playwright-in-Residence Daniel Alexander Jones's staged reading of *Bel Canto* follows a young man's struggle to negotiate between the magical world of opera and the hard-edged jazz-like reality around him. Tuesdays & Wednesdays @ 8 p.m.

Pride Fever! Dance for Women, 8 p.m. - midnight. Presented by Fever! Dance Productions and DJ Dee. \$10, cash bar, complimentary snacks. Sons of Italy Ballroom, Winchester. Info: 781-648-0722.

June 12 ♦ Monday

Biversity Games Night, 7:00 p.m. Join us for a games night on the 2nd floor of the Whimsical Bestiary. E-mail heidi@aq.org for directions. Bring your games (Twister, Vendetta, Pictionary, etc.), or just come and play ours.

June 14 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. The BRC board meets monthly to work on educational programs, the bi office, the web site, the international bi organizing, fund raising, etc. All bi community members welcome to attend. The meeting is at 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

June 17 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m., will be held at the ever-popular Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square in Somerville. The Davis Square T Stop is right across the street.

Best Bisexual Erotica, 7:00 p.m. Grand Opening is sponsoring a reading of local contributors to the collection. 318 Harvard St., Suite 32, Brookline. Take the C Line on the Green Line to the Coolidge Corner stop.

June 20 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Dating Strategies." See June 6th.

June 21 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space, 7-9 p.m. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. Tonight's topic is "Finding Partners." A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for the space. BiSpace is held at the BRC at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston.

June 23 ♦ Friday

Fifth Annual Pride in Health Breakfast, 9:00 a.m. - noon. The breakfast honors the role of community-based agencies, health professionals, and the GLBT communities in improving the health and wellness of GLBT people across Massachusetts. Call Jeremy Mahoney for more info, 617-988-2605 x202.

June 25 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Brunch will be at the Baja Cafe, 109 Dartmouth St. in Boston. Nearest T is Back Bay on the Orange Line.

CALENDAR continues on page 11



Photo by Tom Nola

Body Image

Folding Woman

By Anne M. Hudson

Folded in, folded up, put away
the soul's seed
its curving surfaces
ovoid shapes
buried
hidden from light

We strike poses (*hold it right there*)
to prepare for our careers:
the face in the mirror
the reflection in admirers' eyes
the image on the camera's lens

(*Freeze; don't move*)

Unfolding, unfurling
The curl of petals
Opening in the sun

Just as we unfold,
why do we fold in,
Recoiling unnaturally from
The fullness of bloom?

We can't pinch the blossom
Back to a bud.
The rose moves as it turns toward the light.

Bi and Large:

A Little Rant About Some Big Issues

By Hanne Blank

What do being fat and being bisexual have in common? No, there's no punchline; I'm being serious here. I've been both fat and bisexual for my entire life, or at least as far back as I can remember, and yet when it came time for me to write about fatness and bisexuality in my book *Big Big Love: A Sourcebook on Sex for People of Size and Those Who Love Them* (Greenery Press, 2000), I could barely come up with anything to say. I looked around, I asked around, and what I found was that while people had all kinds of things to say about fatness as a feminist issue, and fat as a self-esteem issue, being fat and gay or lesbian, or fat and a parent, or fat and a Yankees fan...the whole fat/bi thing just wasn't eliciting a lot of response. I found, in fact, one (one!) resource specifically for fat bisexuals, an email list for bisexual fat admirers. Since I finished writing the book, though, I've been giving the whole issue of bisexuality and fat a lot of thought. There's an awful lot of crossover, more than many folks may suspect.

Large continues on page 10

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Volunteers of the Month

Gail

Robyn Ochs

Elle Thomas

Kathryn Schnaible

Annie Goglia

Andrea

Rosalie

Debbie Block-Schwenk

Kate Griffin

Melissa

Lynn Levine

Marshall Miller

Ann

Abby

And many more fabulous women! You know who you are!

BiWomen is published bi-monthly.

Editor:

Ellyn Ruthstrom

Proofreader:

Printed on recycled paper

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.


Editor's Notes

Welcome to our sixteen-page issue on Body Image. I hope that you will enjoy the collection of articles and artwork on this fascinating topic. These pages include a great array of responses to how we view our bodies and parts of our bodies, and our selves. I want to thank all of the writers and photographers for contributing some incredibly moving pieces.

I think the variety of the writing speaks to the diversity we have within our community about a lot of things. I would like to encourage you, the reader, to consider sharing a part of your self with the rest of us for a future issue. It doesn't have to be a long piece, even a letter to the editor expressing how you felt about reading something in our pages is a great way to participate. BBWN is not just for Boston. *BiWomen* gets sent all over this country, and overseas, too. We would love to have input from as far afield as possible.

I also want to take a moment to thank someone in our community who is an essential (yet usually invisible) part of BBWN. Gail Zacharias has been managing the BBWN/*BiWomen* database for many years and she prepares the newsletter labels for each issue. (She's also a kick-ass two-stepper.) We greatly appreciate Gail's longevity, consistency, and ability to pull through for us in a crunch. Thank you, Gail!

We are in search of a new mailing diva to take the place of Elle Thomas. The job description is that six evenings a year you organize the newsletter mailing at The Living Center and cheer on the folks who show up to help you. Please contact me if you may be interested in learning the easy steps to doing this. If it sounds possible but you'd like to share the responsibility with someone else that is fine, too.

I hope you all have some bodacious bi fun for the rest of the summer! Check out the calendar for activities to keep you busy these last few weeks of the summer. Cheers! 

NEXT IN *BiWOMEN*

The *BiWomen* theme for October/November is:

Bicultural, Biracial, Bisexual

Were you raised in a bicultural or biracial family? Have you been in a bicultural or biracial relationship(s)? How do these experiences shape the way you see yourself as bisexual? What borders of culture, race, or sexuality do you live within?

Deadline: September 11, 2000

FUTURE ISSUES IN 2000

December/January
Bi Youth

February/March
Creativity

PLEASE SUBMIT TO *BiWOMEN*!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to

NellyThrustmor@aol.com

If you do not want your name published, please tell us.

All articles and art appearing in this newsletter are copyrighted by the authors and artists.

BBWN Financial Statement, January 1 through June 30, 2000

Submitted by Robyn Ochs, Treasurer for BBWN

Balance forward 1/1/00: 1534.00

Expenses

Printing 1153.86
Postal fees & postage 88.54
Merchandise purchased (buttons) 79.50
Event expenses 246.13
Bulk mail permit 100.00
Total expenses 1668.03

Income

Dues 870.00
Advertising 40.00
Merchandise 561.52
Bank Interest 8.59
Donations 175.00

Event income 857.50

Total income 2512.61

Balance as of 6/30/99: \$2378.58

Treasurer's comments: We are in better shape than we were at this time last year. However, our cushion is not yet soft enough. If anyone would like to make a donation to BBWN, please consider doing so. Checks can be sent to BBWN or, if you wish your donation to be tax deductible, you may channel it through our parent organization, BRC (PO Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140) be sure to put "for BBWN" in the comment line. ▽

Celebrate Bisexuality Day!

Saturday, September 23 is International Celebrate Bisexuality Day and this year is the second annual celebration. At presstime there were no details available, but the Bisexual Resource Center is committed to having a great event. For more updated information, call Marshall at 617-927-6032, e-mail mmiller@fenwayhealth.org, or look for updates on the BRC webpage: <http://www.biresource.org>. Then come out and party!

Bi Readings Galore!

Boston's bi writers' community had a very busy spring season this year with two major book releases that held readings at New Words Bookstore in Cambridge. Both evenings were well attended and displayed some exciting talent to keep an eye on. Look for reviews of these titles in future issues of *BiWomen*.



Photos by Ellyn Ruthstrom

Above: Readers on May 21 for *Blessed Bi Spirit: Bisexual People of Faith* were, left to right: Marcia Diehl, Gilly Rosenthol, editor Debra Kolodny, Amanda Udis-Kessler, and Raven Kaldera.



Left: Editors Carol Queen and Bill Brent were not present, but six fabulous writers shared their work from *Best Bisexual Erotica*. Left to right, back row: Marilyn Jaye Lewis, Raven Kaldera, Hanne Blank, Cecilia Tan; front row: Madeleine Schulman and Jaclyn Friedman.

North American Bi Conference

The First North American Conference on Bisexuality, Gender, and Sexual Diversity 2001 (NACB 2001) is to be held at the University of British Columbia Conference Centre in Vancouver, Canada, August 9 - 12, 2001. Proposals for all subjects related to the region(s) of North America will be considered, and contributions from all levels of expertise and experience are welcome. NACB 2001 seeks proposals for papers, presentations, panel discussions, lectures, interactive workshops, readings, cultural events, performances, displays, and days of action to be held during the conference on all subjects relating to bisexuality, gender, and sexual diversity. The thematic concentration for NACB 2001 will be: "Unity in Diversity: The Many Faces of Bi and Queer in the Americas." Deadline for completed proposal forms is April 1, 2001. Send completed forms to: NACB 2001 - Call for Submissions, c/o P.O. Box 53515, 984 West Broadway, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V5Z 1K0. Further information about the conference can be found at: <http://bi.org/~binetbc/2001>.

Weebles Wobble But They Don't Fall Down

by Elle Thomas

I don't have a flat stomach. I used to. Back when I was a brown belt in karate. Back when I rock climbed three times a week, and practiced yoga everyday. My body looked great back then - concave abs, killer triceps, robust veins in forearms and hands, angular face thin and strong. A photographer approached me in the gym, asked me to model for him; that's how cut I was, how well I moved. These days, I have a Guinness belly. Jeans bought as hipsters now settle no lower than my waist. Cut off T-shirts aren't as flattering as they once were. I know that my body has looked better, healthier. But I have never been more at ease with myself than I am now. My self-image, my self-confidence, has ceased to be a reflection of my body fat percentage.

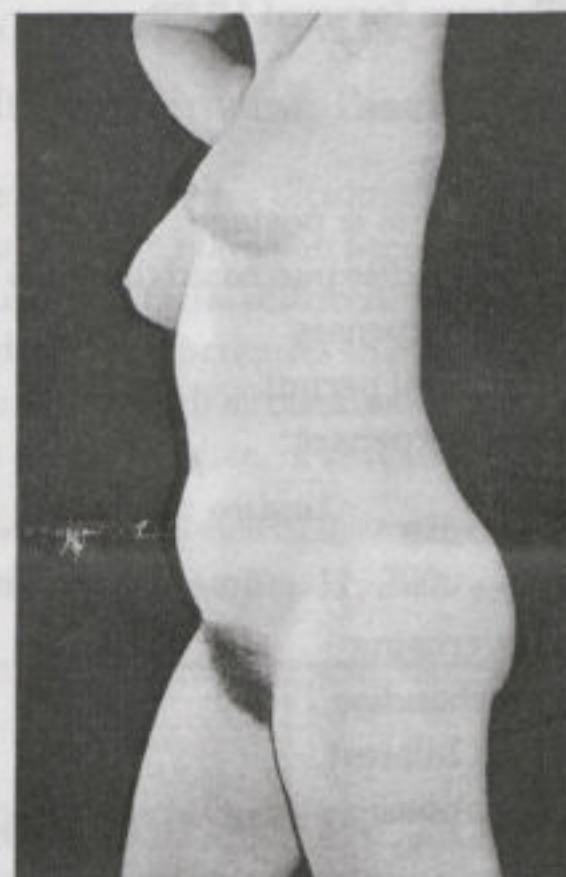
Two years ago I stopped working out. I don't mean that I eased up on my workouts, or took a few weeks off. It wasn't a choice. I mean that I wasn't allowed to lift a grocery bag from April to August, was forbidden to ride a stationary bicycle until December. I had never lasted 72 hours without some sort of taxing physical exertion in my life, and it was a rather drastic change. But it was, I believe, a necessary one. Without that experience, I'm not sure that I would have put various facets of my life into perspective, certainly not at the age of 28.

On April 7, 1998, I was admitted to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center: my diagnosis - a cerebral stroke. I spent six days completely horizontal, my bed a harshly parallel 180° to the floor. I had to eat and drink lying down, my head flat, turned to the side. I had difficulty seeing, could not hear out of one ear, and my speech was severely slurred. There was nothing I could do except sleep (virtually impossible in a hospital), cry and think about life - how I had been spending mine, how suddenly the arrogant confidence of youth and health can be erased, how precious and powerful the ability to communicate in our world. It was nine days before I was allowed to stand up, to walk, to use the bathroom. Those 216 hours staring at a bland beige ceiling through drooped eyelids changed me, altered my perception of the world in ways that I have yet to completely fathom. I was discharged after eleven days, wholly unprepared for the condition of my body after such disuse. A set of twenty stairs was a minute-long hike, a walk with my zigzagging beagle a frightening, disorienting challenge. The doctors said that the probable cause of my

stroke was blunt force trauma, likely from a forceful takedown during a karate competition. But they'd never be able to say with certainty why a blood vessel dissected and lodged in my brain stem, causing necrosis of small sections of my brain. What is for certain is that having a brain injury altered my self-perception - for the better.

I had always defined myself by my physical activities - I was a martial artist, a dancer, a rock climber, a hiker, and an outdoorswoman. Suddenly, I was unable to participate in those activities. The process of recovery was terribly lonely, and I felt profound loss on many levels. There were few friends in my life at that time, as I was simultaneously going through a divorce. There were "our" friends, who felt compelled to choose between my ex and I (the majority choosing him), and there were "my" friends, many of whom, I realized during those three months of recuperation spent sleeping and watching television, were based on being athletic. It's not that these people were unsupportive or were fair weather friends. It was that our friendships were based on a shared physical activity, not on shared life perspectives, and our relationships eroded as I was forced to remain home while they camped, climbed, sparred, and patronized the local pub.

When the green light was given to taper the meds and resume exercise eight months later, the desire to resume "my life" was strong. For six months I worked through physical and mental distress, attempting to return my body to the place it had occupied at the time of my injury, when I was preparing to hire a personal trainer and enter a fitness contest. I burned with the physical pain of tight, weak muscles, as well as the mental anguish of utter exhaustion after a



Photos by Natalie Rivkin

five-minute bike ride, from which my heart rate jumped to a chest-thumping 130 beats per minute (40 bpm higher than I expected). I was so far behind what I conceived of as normal that I was embarrassed to be at the gym at all. I cannot conceive of a more demoralizing experience for the person I was. And that is why I know I needed to go through it to mature as a person. But, with teeth gritted, I was at the gym every night and at least once on weekends. I rose each day, put in my eight hours at work, and then another three at the gym, arriving home to collapse in bed, and begin the process anew. I had no life outside of my job and the gym. Gradually, that changed. I became more involved in reading (as my attention span grew to longer than seven

minutes), in my writing (as my handwriting and ability to spell returned), and in the local bisexual community (which I had discovered a few months prior to being hospitalized). In May 1999 I went on a European vacation. During the trans Atlantic flight home, I contracted a chest cold that dropped my voice into the raspy range of Demi Moore and Kathleen Turner, sapped my energy, and kept me from the gym for a solid month. When I finally recovered, the gym had receded from my priority list, replaced by facilitating the Cambridge Women's Center Bi Rap, dating, writing, and a myriad of new friendships with people who were interested in philosophical conversations, who were able to learn as well as to teach, and who appreciated me for the whole of my being, not simply as a compartmentalized athlete.

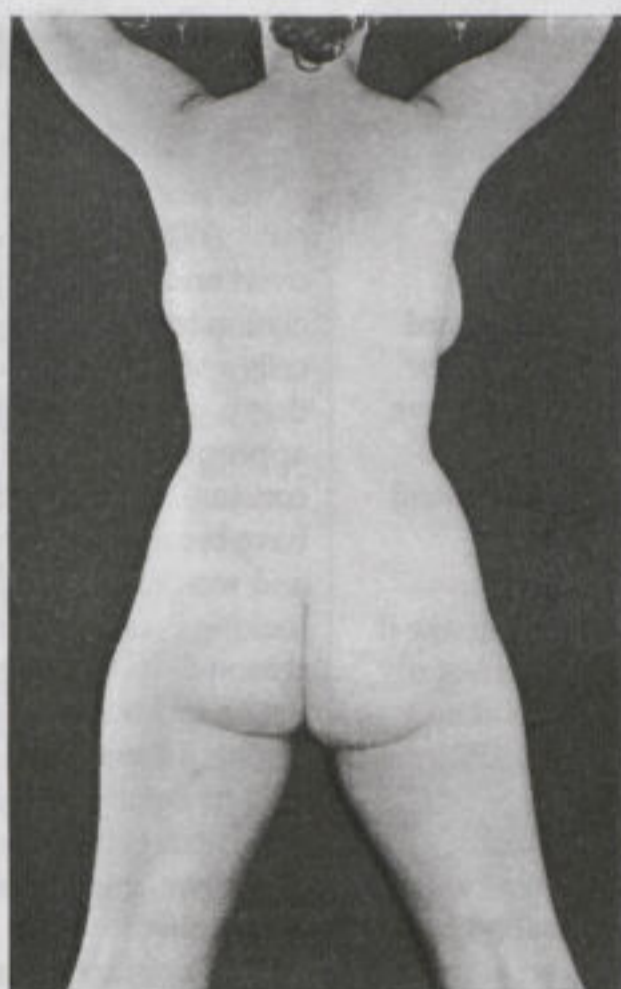
It has been a year since I relinquished my gym rat habits. It would be dishonest to say that at times I do not lament my "lost" body, that I am never concerned with the tightness of my clothes, or that I don't ever wish I were stronger than I am. My mindset is more positive and I sleep better when I am physically active. Discovering and maintaining that balance is an ongoing endeavor. I haven't hit it yet, though I have taken considerable strides toward it. I recently left my long-time white-collar office job, one that paid well but forced me to sit indoors at a computer. I realized that I need a more physically-active and outdoor-oriented

vocation. I don't want a segregated life, but rather an undivided one, where my physical health is not secondary to my work, nor more significant than my emotional welfare. I want to improve my body while cultivating my mind.

I have accomplished so much more, so much outside of myself, than I ever had before. What goodness came from my stomach being taut? How much beauty did I help to build by having large biceps? Now it matters much more to me how I can be of help to others than how much muscle I can pile onto my frame. In the past two years, I nurtured safe space for bi women at Bi Rap, my address book has bulged with names of

wonderful people that I am graced to count as friends, and it has taken three attempts to mark a United States map with dots for all the people I know, because the smaller maps didn't have enough room for them all. My first self-published 'zine is now for sale at New Words Bookstore in Cambridge, meaning that I have earned my first legal tender from writing. I love, and am loved by, a brilliant, radiant woman in the most equal relationship I've ever known. I wake with a smile every morning. I am alive. I am able to walk, dress, write, think, work, love. I can use all parts of my body, and all but five

tiny spots of my brain. These dead areas do have an impact on my abilities, but it is such a slight impact that 99% of the time only long-time friends, my neurologist, and I can tell. My body isn't what it once was, but neither is my emotional health. Today, it truly could not be better. What I have gained in self-understanding annuls those lost pieces thrice over. I am not unhappy, nor itching to do something else or be somewhere else, as I was when I was a svelte fitness buff. I am very comfortable being naked, comfortable looking at myself without clothes and comfortable being seen in the nude. My life is full, wonderful, beautiful. I have never felt more confident, more capable, more centered, more well equipped to take risks and to follow my heart. So who needs a hard body? Not this woman. I'm content with being slightly rounded and very well balanced. ▽



Teaching Respect for All

GLSEN is holding their Fourth Annual Teaching Respect for All Conference in Chicago, October 6-8. Teaching Respect for All is a national summit for those working to end anti-gay prejudice in America's K-12 schools. To provide assistance for a diverse group of youth to attend the meeting, GLSEN has developed three levels of scholarship opportunities: Chicago Area Youth Scholarships, Mid-Western Youth Scholarships, and National Youth Scholarships. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of need, commitment, and interest and will cover some or all registration fees. All participants are responsible for their own meals. Scholarship winners are expected to fundraise for their own travel expenses. Chicago and National Scholarship deadline is August 25th, 2000 (applications received sooner will be considered first); Midwestern Scholarship deadline is August 1st, 2000. Apply online at www.glsen.org/pages/sections/news/calendar/conference/2000/youthaid or contact Chris Tuttle, National Student Organizer, Student Pride USA - GLSEN, 121 West 27th Street, Suite 804, New York, NY 10001, 212-727-0135 Ext. 134, fax: 212-727-0254.

Women Defending Themselves

Submissions are being sought for a collection of women's successful self defense stories. Contributions can be in the form of journal entries, short stories, poetry, photos, and cartoons. The editor wants to share our stories of defending ourselves with the goals of generating discussion and further action, overcoming isolation and inspiring others to fight back. Send your stories of self defense to: Ariel at onaaa@hotmail.com or Ariel, c/o Lucy Parsons Center, 549 Columbus Ave., Boston, MA 02118.

Resistance

My relationship with my body has been one of resistance for most of my life - ever since I came to the realization that I was a girl and that meant something different from simply being a person.

Resistance can mean, according to the old thesaurus in my computer word processor: hindering, fighting back, durability, opposition, impeding, insubordination, endurance, impenetrability, immovability.

I have been resisting the demands of society on the surface of my girl/womanskin all my life. This is where my struggles have been fought, won and lost. And lost and lost and won. My skin has been my battleground, and the scars within and without prove the thing. My body has been, continues to be, my own war zone.

To say that I have resisted on my skin means that I resist shaving, resist society's demand that my body remain in girlhood, and have an adult woman's hair on my legs, under my arms, up between my thighs. I do not shave and it is an act of political resistance. It is a political statement. It is yes in the face of no and no in the face of must.

To say that I have resisted on my skin means that I resist making up my face to make it look "more natural," resist hiding the skin of my face. The bare skin of cheek and lip, eyelid and eyebrow, wrinkles and blemishes and all, is a political statement.

To say that I have resisted on my skin means that I mark my own skin in ways I want to. A ring through the place where my body was once connected to my mother's was an act of reclamation. Fighting back. The black ink of tattoo marking my right shoulder blade was a way for me to write on my own body, to draw my ownership of my body, my skin, that a rapist-stepfather (among others) tried to deny me.

The body in which I now exist is a sturdier version of the one in which I lived before I came out, and began to question (anew) the roles created for women. It is a powerful thing, this body - carries, lifts, moves, takes up space. Often, I sit wide open, legs spread like a man's are expected to be, and take up the space my body desires. Sometimes, I resist the urge to apologize for the fact of my existence. Sometimes, I feel as entitled to the space I take up as the men around me do.

But sometimes I don't. Often, when I am walking, I keep my eyes to the ground and walk quickly, hands in my pockets. Sometimes I don't take up the space I deserve. Sometimes I am broken by my resistance. Sometimes I get tired of

By Jennifer Collins

always saying no and hearing no, feeling and seeing no in the faces and glances of others, in my own eyes in the mirror. Sometimes I'd like to quit.

Sometimes I'd like the freedom to be the self that I am, in the body that feels right to me, and not feel like I'm resisting.

And so I keep resisting.

Sometimes I put on makeup and see beauty.

Sometimes I just see paint and loss.

Sometimes I shave, under the guise of doing "girl drag" the way some beautiful boys can, and all I see is the skinny nakedness of my teenaged arms and legs before puberty and I hate how childlike, and how more fully naked, I look. How vulnerable I feel.

And so I keep resisting.

What I have gained, however, through this overt and covert fighting, is a hard-won appreciation for the self that is mine, this skin and hair, cells and follicles, muscles and organs and tissue that begin to make up this bi butch body. This appreciation is a long time in coming and a constant struggle. Growing up in this culture, I have breathed in the expectations of womanhood and women's bodies. Seven years ago, when looking into the mirror, I decided that if the only reason that I wore makeup was that I literally despised how I looked without it, something was wrong. I wanted to learn to find, if not appreciate, the beauty in my natural skin. Seven years later, I am getting there, and I am happier for this resistance, this denial of the denial of the reality of myself.

Resistance is hard and tiring work. It precludes comfort, is almost antithetical to comfort. At least, at home, in the privacy of the space that my partner and I make for ourselves, I can stop resisting. I can forget for awhile that my body is not stamped with FDA approval, for public consumption. I can live comfortably in an un-waxed, un-plucked, un-masked body. And that, for me, is achievement enough, victory enough, in a war that is long-lasting and all-encompassing. I take a deep breath, put on shorts and hiking boots, and walk out into the steamy heat of July, continuing in the Resistance. ▽

"As long as there is a standard of beauty, a set of positive attributes assigned arbitrarily to a particular set of body parts, there are two camps locked in a xenophobic embrace: those who have the "good" parts, and those who do not; those who are on the inside of the community, and those who, tragically, are relegated to its margins."

Rebecca Walker, from *Adios, Barbie*, see page 12.

Body Image Reality Check

By Denise

I use to believe that what was on the outside of my body and what others saw was my body image. For all of my teen and adult years I have dieted, exercised, and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on fragrances, makeup, shoes, and clothing. I was trying to fulfill the expected body image of society. Reflecting upon this, I realize that I wasted so much energy, money, and time on a ridiculous society imposed standard.

Recently I was diagnosed with Stage 1 breast cancer... what a reality check. My thirty odd years of life flashed before me. I have been picked at, poked at, prodded at, had countless needle sticks, things cut out of me, and things pumped into me. But none of this was as bad as my own self-realization about myself and that mythical body image I portray.

I have always had a beautiful image on the inside regardless of what was reflected on the outside. From head to toe: internally, my brain has housed more than twenty years of education, knowledge, and life experiences that have enabled me to help and share my lifelong learning with others. My Heart has spread love and kindness to a host of family, friends, lovers, and strangers who needed it. My muscles have worked physically to care for the needy and myself. My voice has helped me to counsel on all the inequities of life, suggest valuable changes, as well as give sensible advice to all who asked for it.

Externally, my kind eyes saw beyond everyone's physical appearance and valued them for their existence. My noble nose was never turned up at anyone but could sniff out who was in need. My supple mouth and lips provided a vehicle for long passionate kisses as well as endless oral pleasure to all my lovers. My strong shoulders physically and mentally carried the burdens of my family and friends. My former healthy 38C breast nursed three beautiful babies and provided me with

endless sexually aroused pleasure with male and female lovers. My arms worked hard on routine chores as well as a host of hobbies. My hands wrote many lesson plans through my teaching career; wrote cards, poems, and jokes to lift other people's spirits; and prayed daily for all in need. My stomach bears the scars of a "true woman" with stretch marks from three very enjoyable pregnancies. My vagina bore the three gorgeous, articulate teenagers in my life and has brought me immeasurable sexual

pleasure with explosions of orgasmic ecstasy with both males and females. My legs and feet have carried me to and from all the many obligations I have committed to over the years.

My internal and external body are what truly make me the person I am. The life work that my body has produced as mother, teacher, friend, lover, and leader is what forms the body image of Denise. Not my size, shape, color, health, or imposed societal image.

Photo by



Be happy with who you are and

what your body image projects. Never let anyone impose anything upon you that is not you. We are all beautiful and the sooner we realize it, the sooner individuality and diversity will be the "societal norm." Love yourself always; don't wait for a reality check. ▽

Bi Chick Flick

The Cream Will Rise, first-time director Gigi Gaston's riveting documentary about singer/songwriter Sophie B. Hawkins, will premiere on Friday, September 15 at 9:00 p.m. on the Sundance Channel. Best known for her 1992 hit, "Damn I Wish I Was Your Lover," Hawkins has been open about her pansexuality. *The Cream Will Rise* begins as a chronicle of Hawkins' 1996 Moxy tour and develops into an extraordinarily intimate and frank investigation of the artist's murky childhood after a visit with her voluble mother unearths a family bombshell. ▽

Second Annual South Central Regional Bi Conference

Imagine Bisexual Freedom: Explore the Possibilities, Experience the Dream will be held October 13-15, 2000 at the Holiday Inn - South in beautiful, gay-friendly Austin, Texas. Organizers are looking for speakers, workshop leaders (topics relating to bisexuality), volunteers, vendors, and participants. Possible topics: bisexual spirituality, politics, ideas, practices, diversity, biphobia, polyamory, diversity, sex, games, ethics, movies, studies, etc. Deadline for Call for Abstracts is July 30, 2000! If you are interested in speaking/giving a workshop/volunteering/selling/participating, contact Cidneye at 512-303-3418 or Cydnye@aol.com, or write to her at: 741A, FM 969, Bastrop, Texas 78602.

Sixth International Bisexual Conference

The Sixth International Bisexual Conference (BiCon) will be taking place in Manchester, England, August 24 - 28. The Conference will include four days of socializing, fun, debate, talks as well as entertainment and sightseeing, a chance to meet old friends and make new ones. The conference is still looking for artwork donations that will be on display throughout the conference and then auctioned off with the proceeds donated to bi community causes. Deadline for postal submissions is August 10. They should be sent to Line Bi Line, BM BiCon, London, WC1N 3XX, England. For further information concerning the conference and conference booking, including USA booking information, contact: bicon@bi.org or <http://come.to/bicon/> or BM BiCon, London, England WC1N 3XX (send an SAE/IRC).

Baring and Sharing

By [REDACTED]

I'm one of the photographers for *BiWomen*. As such, it's often my job to get women to volunteer to pose for photographs pertaining to the upcoming issue, and to encourage them to write a short or long piece to go with it. It suddenly occurred to me that I wasn't one of those women; I started hearing in my head that old saying, "charity begins at home" and I made the agonizing decision to actually allow myself to be on the other side of the camera...to be photographed as well as write that oh, so difficult piece to go with it.

I used to think of myself as a natural born athlete. Back then, I could play any sport - but more importantly, I could play any sport and be good at it! And I'm not talking about girly sports, but rather the rough and tough sports like basketball, baseball, and soccer. Hell, even football. In fact, I was BETTER than most of the boys I played with. Back then, they didn't have those team sports for girls to play on. So, if you wanted to play, you had to play with the boys. And I did! (Hell, it's only been in recent years that women have even gotten a smidgen of the acceptance and recognition that they deserve for playing as hard as men...if not harder. Now they have their own teams and leagues, etc. But I guess that is for another story.) You see, I could run faster, throw farther, and hit harder than most boys could. I was even as flat chested as they were. At least in the beginning...

I was in the seventh grade when I started to develop. And develop. And develop. My chest didn't stop growing till I was in the tenth or eleventh grade, when I finally stopped at a whopping bra size of 36D. Now I know many of you are thinking that that's not so big. But when you're an athlete with small petite legs and a small waist like I had, having a chest that size was a huge deal! Not to mention the joking and teasing I got from my teammates. They'd say things like, "How many times did coach tell you not to hide the soccer balls under your jersey?" Or, "Aren't you afraid those things will give you a black eye bouncing up and down like that!" Now, don't get me wrong, I could take and tell a joke with the best of them. I even made jokes about my breasts myself. It wasn't the joking or teasing that bothered me as much as believing that my body

had betrayed me. An athlete wasn't supposed to have such large breasts! You were supposed to be well proportioned. I wanted to be well proportioned! Instead, I had this awkward body shape that I soon began to hate. It left me with low self-esteem and a negative self-image. I even started wearing extra large T-shirts just to hide my chest. And to make matters worse, it soon became the cause of years of back pain.

It wasn't until my junior year in college that things got so bad I couldn't dare bare it any longer. Due to the extra weight I was carrying up top, my back would go into major spasms one or two times a week, putting me in bed for the rest of the day on heavy pain killers. Finally, after several visits and conversations with my doctor and

parents, they decided it would be best for me to have a breast reduction. So, during my six-week winter break (which was just enough time for me to heal well enough to go back to school without having to wear that damn breast harness), I went under the knife. As I still had another year and a half of



Photo by Ellyn Ruthstrom

school to finish, keeping my surgery a secret was no easy task. I didn't want people to know I had gone off and had my breasts cut into! And the thought of ANYONE finding out left me mortified! I didn't even tell my sisters until months later. I guess I just hoped that people would think that I miraculously lost a ton of weight in my chest over the break. Fortunately, most people did. I got compliment after compliment. It was great...for a little while anyway. Shortly thereafter, I began to realize that even though I got compliments left and right, I would soon want to start dating again, which often resulted in having sex, which often meant being naked with a guy. And if that happened, then he would most definitely see my scars, which would definitely freak him out, resulting in rejection, which was more horrifying for me than anything else! So, I didn't date. Well, not long enough with one person to create any concern of having them reject me. Instead, I rejected them before they got the chance to reject me. And so began the start of another long period of low self-esteem and negative body image, not to mention self-rejection and lots of loneliness.

It's only been in my most recent relationship, years later, that I've truly been able to be intimate and to feel comfortable about being

me...scars and all. Not to say that it's been easy and that I don't still deal with the negative, I do. But I continue to try to stay focused on the positive. In fact, just a few months ago, after a video night at my house, a few friends and I were hanging out and decided to do a sharing circle. But instead of your average sharing experience, we decided to go around and share one thing about our breast. Anything at all. Positive or negative. So, I decided to share the fact that I had had a breast reduction. Can I tell you what a relief that was?! After years of keeping my scars a secret, with the exception of a very few select people, I was finally able to say outloud, "I like my breasts, scars and all." Wow! What an exhilarating experience! What a difference it made in how I began to accept myself, my body, my scars. I was finally able to share my secret with a group of people...and now with all of you. But this may not be everyone's story. Others may not have such a positive ending. Please know that it's a long struggle to accept yourself for who you are. Be patient, it will come. ▽

Letter to the Editor

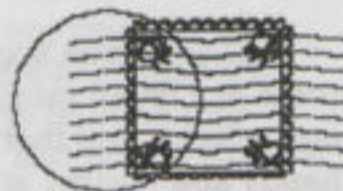
Dear Bi Women,

Thank you for producing and circulating your newsletter. It has been very helpful for me in understanding my new sexual orientation.

I had my first love affair with a woman in March at my age of 61 years.

It was very exciting and it did not last as a relationship. Nevertheless, I am very grateful to this woman for "awakening" me. ▽

Sincerely,
Marcia



GLBT Christian Gathering

On August 3-6, the largest cross-denominational gathering of Christian gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) individuals, their families, and allies will take place in DeKalb, IL, at Northern Illinois University. Witness our Welcome 2000: God's Promise Is for You (WOW2000) will be proclaiming that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) people are made in God's image, and are part of the goodness of God's diverse creation. GLBT youth will be gathering for their own conference during this time, with a special emphasis on creating a safe space within the church for GLBT youth to discover that there is a special place in many churches for them to explore the love of God for all people. For information on scholarships and the youth program, contact Scott Mills at (925) 687-8844 ext. 308 or scottmills@chd-prevention.org. For additional information about the WOW2000 Conference or registration, see <http://www.wow2k.org> or 800-318-5581.

Beauty and Body Image

By Sheeri Krizter

I pose nude because that's the way I prefer being. I do not appreciate clothing that hides my curves, nor do I like artifacts produced by an industry that thinks any woman larger than a size 12 (US) must be hidden in tent-like structures. For me, the purpose of clothing is to keep me warm - aside from the obvious legal ramifications of walking around naked in Massachusetts.

Getting to know and love my body has been one of the most difficult challenges I have faced. It's a very personal thing. I have learned to like my stomach, even though it is bigger than I'd like it to be. I appreciate my muscular thighs, even though there's quite a bit of fat on them as well. I have been blessed with a body that functions, so how can I not love it? How can I hate my calves when they propel me across a room so effortlessly? I appreciate my body because it works. My chubby fingers type, write, pick things up, cook, clean, hold people, gesture... I

cannot say I do not like my fingers because of a cosmetic reason.

It was not easy to look in the mirror after years of hearing, "You're fat, nobody will love you if you continue to look this way," and still like my body. It was a long process. I do

remember the elation I felt when I stood in front of the mirror and actually saw a beautiful woman reflected. For months I had been staring in that looking glass, looking for things I liked about myself that were physical: my nose, the way my hips curved in, my calves. Eventually I could say, "I have a great waistline, even if it is a size 36."

People around me learned from me. Suddenly, people found me sexy. Perhaps I held my chin up higher. Maybe I walked differently; held

my body in a confident and poised manner. Being beautiful can be skin deep. It can also be completely about attitude: how you feel about yourself and your body. If you love your body, it will love you back. ▽



Photo by [redacted]

Girls Who Kiss and Tell

The 'zine *Philogyny* is looking for new and established writers to submit material for future issues. All topics are needed and welcome. We are always accepting submissions that do not fall into upcoming topic issues. Especially interested in the following for upcoming issues: stories with vanilla sex and essays on poly relationships or Pro-s/m and Anti-s/m philosophies. We also have a few column ideas that need writers. Contact us for more information on columns. Upcoming deadlines August 1 and December 1, 2000. Deadline for Pride 2001 issue is February 1, 2001. Format: Personal accounts, academic essays, erotic stories, short erotic stories, photos, artwork, poetry (limited), humorous essays about lesbian sex/dating; informative columns, reviews. We strongly suggest you send for guideline. You can e-mail us at philogynyzone@hotmail.com or mail SASE to Philogyny, P.O. Box 381732, Cambridge, MA 02238.

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People assume you can, should, and want to "do something about it."

Rather than accepting that people come in a broad range of sizes and shapes and weights and that it's possible to be happy and healthy at a lot of places along that spectrum, people automatically assume that it is not only possible but eminently desirable to do whatever it takes to be on the thin and toned end of the spectrum, the one most appealing to mainstream ideals of what bodies are "supposed to" be like. Now mind you, it's not necessarily true that everyone wants to be thin. Some people don't, and some couldn't care less. It's even less true that everyone who wants to be thinner than they are can realistically be so, at least on any semi-permanent basis. Research repeatedly shows that somewhere around 90% of people who do lose weight gain it back, and recent studies have begun to explore the existence of many biological - not merely behavioral - reasons behind this.

Similarly, rather than accepting that people come in a broad range of sexualities and types of sexual expression and that it's possible to be happy and healthy in a lot of places along that spectrum, people automatically assume that it's not only possible but desirable to do whatever it might take to be at one end of the spectrum or the other, securely tucked into either the straight community or the gay one. Not too surprisingly, not everyone feels quite so comfortable with the idea of lopping off a part of their sexuality just so they can fit into one of society's Procrustean sexual-orientation beds. Still, many people do try to deny their bisexual capacities and attractions in favor of being more completely accepted in either the straight or gay worlds... and we know approximately how well that works, too, in terms of erasing or changing people's fundamental attractions, yearnings, and desires.

People make judgements about you by assuming they know a whole lot more about you and your life than they really do.

Well, everyone knows that fat people are stupid and lazy, never have worthwhile jobs, and never do anything meaningful with their lives, let alone exercise, preferring to sit around on their gigantic kiesters flipping the remote and eating intergalactically huge quantities of food, right? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? And I think we all realize by now

that bisexuals are all promiscuous marriage-wrecking AIDS-spreading fence-sitters who put their degenerate, obsessive lusts ahead of any other consideration in life, not even caring what sex or gender the person they're having sex with might be. I'm just making sure we're all on the same page, here.

Being fat and bisexual, I must say that this makes for some difficult life choices. Some days I don't know which to do first, lie on the divan eating another 55-gallon ice cream sundae with a double helping of deep-fried lard sauce or dive face first into my convenient local bisexual orgy of anonymous free-flying sexual fluids that is, naturally enough, happening at all hours of the day and night. Personally, I'm impressed that I even had time to write this article.

People pass judgement on whether or not you are "different enough" to be a part of a community based on common difference.

If you're not "fat enough" for some folks' tastes, if they don't think you've lived through as much weight-related oppression and abuse as they feel is necessary for a person to be justified in thinking of themselves as having issues around fat, weight, and size, they'll probably tell you that they don't really think you're justified in trying to become part of the size acceptance movement. If you're lucky, you may be welcomed anyway, but as a "sympathetic ally." Where some people are concerned, you may simply not measure up. One of these days, maybe people will wake up to the fact that there's no magic number of pounds that makes you "fat enough," and that in this culture, people of any size can suffer internal and/or external size and weight related oppression.

If you're not "bi enough" or "queer enough" for someone else's tastes, the same thing often happens. I know I'm not the only bi woman to have been told at various times that I wasn't eligible to participate in gay/lesbian events because I wasn't "queer enough." I also know I'm not the only bi woman to have ever been assumed to be merely a "straight supporter" by a fellow bisexual, simply because I was monogamously partnered with a man. Maybe someday, people will realize that diverging even one angstrom from Kinsey zero über-heterosexuality is likely to mean that a person shares some issues and experiences with everyone else who does.

You can be invisible almost anywhere.

In the world at large, being fat means you haven't been included in the master plan


for a lot of things. Try finding clothes that fit you at your average clothing store, for instance, or going to a movie or traveling on an airplane without ending up with semi-permanent divots in your ass. Taking the subway is always a good reminder of the fact that you're not supposed to exist as you squeeze uncomfortably through turnstiles that weren't designed to deal with people like you. Don't bother trying to find too many positive images of people who look like you do in the media, either. You'd think it'd be hard to be invisible when you take up more physical space than most other people do, but you'd be wrong.

In the world at large, being bisexual means you haven't been included in the master plan for a lot of things, too. Try introducing your co-workers to a boyfriend at one annual Christmas party, then introducing them to a girlfriend at the next. You'll be amazed by how fast you've turned into a lesbian, without anyone making even a stopover at the mental train station marked "bisexual." Don't bother looking to mass media for too many positive images of bisexuals, but don't get upset, no one's saying you have to be like Ally McBeal or anything. Why, these days you have options - you can be like Ellen DeGeneres, or even k. d. lang.

You can be invisibilized in minority communities, too. In the world of fat-acceptance organizations, sexuality issues rarely even make it to the table, unless the discussion has to do with reasserting that fat people can be sexually attractive. Admittedly, that's a good thing to know, but it's hardly the only issue at hand. I've been at many size-acceptance community events where I've watched all the GLBT folks self-segregating so as not to feel overwhelmed by the aggressive presumption of heterosexuality. Is it really so difficult and so threatening to admit that not all fat people are straight, and that straight or not, we are likely to have common issues about fat, relationships, and sexuality?

While we're at it, I'm tired of seeing groups for fat queers where fat bis aren't truly welcome, and end up having to self-censor in order to be accepted. I get a little irritable when I have to settle for the good graces of a half-hearted "bi-friendly" clause when I go to a "womyn of size" event. I get even more irritable when I mention my intergendered partner, who just happens to have a factory-installed penis, and get the frosty "well, you're not really one of us" reaction as soon as it becomes evident that I am openly bisexual. Is it so threatening and so difficult to get around the idea that not all fat queer people are either lesbian or gay, and yet we are likely to have

common issues about being fat and being queer?

These are just a few of the issues that bisexuality and fat have in common. I haven't even mentioned some of them, like the "nature vs. nurture" argument, or the notion that neither fat people or bisexual people make good parents or good role models for kids. For me, and people like me who are both bi and large, it's often all too easy to compartmentalize, to say "this problem is a fat thing" or "this issue is a bi thing" when what we're really looking at is the kind of generalized oppression and invisibility that happen when we're different in ways that really stick in society's craw. For me, being bi and large is a great foundation to build alliances with other people who, like me, don't fit either the norm, like thinness and heterosexuality, or the accepted alternanorms, like continual and public attempts at weight loss, or mainstreamed, traveler's-check-ad homosexuality. Learning about the continuities of difference and building bridges based on the similarities of shared human difference and difficulty rather than self-ghettoizing in the name of identity politics is an important - dare I say vital? - task. We already know we have much to learn from other groups' and people's differences. I daresay we would do well not to forget that we stand to learn as much from our own. 

This article has also appeared in Scarlet Letters: A Journal of Femmerotica (scarletletters.com). Check out Hanne's web site at www.bigbiglove.com/author.htm.

Browser Beat: By Elle Thomas

After searching a hundred sites and spending four hours online, I am sad to report that I was unable to find even one site that I felt comfortable recommending. There are a lot of sites that pertain to body image out there. However, they fall into one of the following categories: (1) be proud to be fat [and don't bother us if you aren't]; (2) the media pushes negative images on women, so buy my product and learn to ignore it; or (3) take our test to determine how messed up you are about your body image [without any real information or tools to help change it].

Scarlet Letters

Scarlet Letters: A Journal of Femmerotica, the award-winning woman-run quarterly web journal of sexual fiction, artwork, poetry, and creative nonfiction, seeks submissions. Erotic prose, poetry, and sexually-related creative nonfiction up to approximately 8000 words are currently being sought for the upcoming issues and themes. November 2000: The Hand of Fate - Doomed Love and Romance: Tragedy, love and sexuality, the doomed romance in literature and art, melodrama in relationships, sex and love as poisons, chivalry and romance in the modern day. Deadline: September 15. February 2001: With this Ring, I Thee Bed - Marriage and Monogamy: Sexual and spiritual monogamy, sex in marriages, family life and sexuality, cultural expectation and reality, social conditioning, the history of sex and marriage, cultural politics and same-sex unions, couples and pairs in art. Deadline: December 15. For submission guidelines, payment information, and submissions addresses and procedures, please see our Submissions Guideline page at <http://scarletletters.com/submit.html>.

"Camp" Camp

This year is the fourth year of "Camp" Camp, a week-long GLBT adult camping experience in Kezar Falls, Maine. Running August 21-27 and costing \$745, camp includes all meals, lodging in cabins, and activities such as yoga and pottery classes, canoe trips, mountain biking, tea dances, hottubs and singing around the campfire. Call 888-924-8380, e-mail at info@campcamp.com or check out the web site at www.campcamp.com.



Autumn Gender-Free Dance Camp

Lavender Country and Folk Dancers are offering their Autumn Gender-Free Dance Camp September 15-17 in Becket, Massachusetts. Camp includes contra dancing, English country dancing, international folk dancing, singing, a variety show, and games. Housing is in dorms with bunk beds; bathrooms have hot showers. Meals include vegetarian selections. Register by August 19 for reduced rate; after August 19, member \$170, non-member \$190. Register at CampReg@ContraCorner.com or see www.tiac.net/users/latte/lcfd/dancecamp.cgi for more info.



Book Review:

Adios, Barbie (aka Body Outlaws): Young Women Write About Body Image and Identity,
edited by Ophira Edut, 1998

Reviewed by Ellyn Ruthstrom

Even the controversy over the cover of the book for *Adios, Barbie: Young Women Write About Body Image and Identity* attests to the power of the Barbie icon within our culture. The first cover had images of a Barbie leg, brush, and shoe on it and Mattel Corporation cried copyright infringement and sued small Seal Press. Although Seal believed that the parody section of the copyright laws covered them, they didn't have the funds to fight the huge corporation. In their settlement, they agreed to take the name Barbie out of the title and change the cover art. So if you go to find it, look for *Body Outlaws: Young Women Write About Body Image and Identity*.

In my girlhood, I played with Barbie and Ken and Skipper and Madge (she had the dark hair), but I was also very outdoorsy and athletic and played a lot of team sports. I don't remember ever being a Barbie fanatic, but I do remember other girls around me who seemed to go into another zone when they played with these dolls. Yes, I played with these dolls but I don't ever remember wanting to be blonde or drive a red convertible. Obviously, we can't blame all of the screwed up body issues of contemporary girls and women on these long-legged plastic dolls, but this vision of white girl perfection that Mattel meticulously defends has and is shaping girlhood in America.

In the introduction to this fabulous book, editor Ophira Edut (editor of the now-defunct *HUES* magazine [*Hear Us Emerging Sisters*]) puts Barbie on notice to get out of town. This is not a book simply about trying to lose weight or trying to rid yourself of the desire to lose weight. Edut has found a diverse pool of writers who deal with a wide range of topics from being big, being small, eating disorders, tattoos, acne, good hair/bad hair, shaving, virginity, being an athlete, being disabled, and the multiple ways that ethnicity and race shape one's personal sense of one's body. The women in this book unshackle the cultural hold of the tippy-toed blonde while exploring the multiple ways that our bodies can often rule our lives.

Rebecca Walker, noted bi writer/activist and Third Wave feminist, contributed the

forward. She discusses her own image quandary from the perspective of a biracial woman and how while she was growing up she never felt dark enough. But she has found strength to accept herself through the images of her fair-skinned grandmother and Lena Horne, and by being loved by others. In one passage she highlights her biness with mixed pronouns, "My lover is in the story, too, telling me again and again, as many times as it takes, how sexy I am and how much s/he likes my color and the fact that I'm neither black nor white, but both, some land in the middle s/he doesn't find too threatening to love."

A few of the writers deal directly with the effect of Barbies on their own and other women's self image. Susan Gilman pointedly calls the dolls, Klaus Barbies (after the Nazi commander) because, "This 'pop artifact' is an icon of Aryanism...[Barbies] ultimately succeed where Hitler failed: They instill in legions of little girls a preference for whiteness, for blonde hair, blue eyes and delicate features, for an impossible uberfigure, perched eternally and submissively in high heels." Despite the fact that Mattel has "diversified" into more ethnic Barbies through different skin tones and wardrobe, the features and body type stay the same and they are clearly marked as "special editions," not the real thing. Gilman humorously contributes her own new line of special editions she would like to see. Among them are: "Bisexual Barbie. Comes in a package with Skipper and Ken." And "Butch Barbie. Comes with short hair, leather jacket, 'Silence=Death' T-shirt, pink triangle buttons, Doc Martens, pool cue and dental dams. Packaged in cardboard closet with doors flung wide open. Barbie Carpentry Business sold separately."

Our bodies are where our race, ethnicity, culture, and sexuality are made visible, and so the isms get acted out on our bodies depending on how people read them. Walker is not the only woman who mentions how their biracial identities are acted out on their skins. Several of the women of color write about the "What are you?" phenomenon, where people (especially men) need to find out what their heritage is so they can be neatly categorized. Being exoticized is an offshoot of this behavior as well, and Mira Jacob describes in painful detail how her "mysterious" Indian looks prompt countless men to openly harass her or presume an unbridled sexuality laying beneath that they deserve access to. Initially, she chose to be silent in her reactions to it, and later her response was to become loud, to curse loudly and often, and to talk freely and extensively about her neuroses and bodily functions. Either way, she wasn't herself. She finally realized that others would always see what they wanted to see and that it

was most important to define herself for herself.

There is not a lot of queer content in the book, but it does have some lesbian and bi women in it. Jill Corral's piece, "Lucy, I'm Home" is written from her standpoint as a married Cuban American bisexual woman who sees herself on la frontera, "the borderlands," a term used by writer Gloria Anzaldua to describe being a Chicana lesbian. Corral's borders are many and she writes eloquently of her bicultural and bisexual self being a part of that. "People like me, who don't fit neatly, are often unfairly assumed to be weaker, watered-down versions of the real thing....But this fluidity is my strength. This middle I inhabit is richer than any extreme. I thrive in its duality and possibility."

This is an incredibly rich collection of essays written by amazing young women. Don't skip a single one. The book broadens the discussion of the usual body image issues far beyond suburban middle-class white girls. These writers have kicked Barbie's ass on this one. Wish we could kick Mattel's. ▼



Bi Barbie with Skipper and Ken

My Private Catwalk

By Abby Stevens

I am 5'2", 200+ lbs, weight evenly proportioned, with golden brown curly hair, and a rosy complexion. When I walk down the street, I like the way my body feels. My tummy, butt, breasts and thighs giggle. Oftentimes, I have an image in my head of a runway model with her skinny assets shifting hither and thither as she struts down the catwalk. I actually feel like that runway model and it gives me a smile.

Occasionally, I'll get a comment or a look as I'm walking down the street. If I'm lucky, it's usually that I'm a T-bone steak and the viewer is a ravenous animal look. (I'm probably supposed to be offended by such things but I'm not.) Also, occasionally, I get a rude comment like, "Too fat." Do I lower my head? Does the runway model image leave my brain? I try not to let it. I may not be "all that" to that viewer or you or anyone but I feel good in my own body. I'm healthy. I exercise more than I used to and my stamina is getting better every day. I shouldn't have to explain this to people in order not to hear, "Too fat." But, alas, our society has always been quick to judge whether spoken aloud or not. It's a shame most people equate fat with an unhealthy lifestyle.

I won't dwell on the negativity. We don't like in others what we don't like in ourselves. Those who think I'm too fat and don't deserve the confidence I possess have their own insecurities to get over. I'll just keep smilin' and struttin' down my imaginary catwalk while admiring all the different body types I see every day. ▼

Swim for Life



Saturday, September 9 is the Thirteenth Annual Swim for Life and Community Festival AIDS Benefit in Provincetown. This is a 1.4 mile open water swim and all proceeds benefit various Provincetown and Cape Cod AIDS organizations. Contact information: call 508-487-3684, e-mail at reroot@tiac.net, or check out www.ptownlib.com/swim.html.

Women's Summer Music Festivals

August 8-13, Michigan Womyn's Music Festival near Hart, Michigan. RV camping and tents. Depending on how many days you go for, prices are on a sliding scale and vary from \$60 - \$380. Fees cover all activities and performances, three meals a day, film festival, and childcare. See the web site for all details: www.michfest.com or call 231-757-4766.

September 1-3, Wiminifest in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Contact: WIMIN, P.O. Box 80204, Albuquerque, NM 87198, 505-899-3627 or 800-499-5688, wiminifest@hotmail.com.

September 1-4, Northeast Women's Musical Retreat in Marlborough, Connecticut. Contact:

NEWMR, P.O. Box 57, Hartford, CT 06141, 860-293-8026, NEWMR2000@aol.com.

September 3, Midwest Womyn's Autumnfest in Dekalb, Illinois. Contact: Athena Productions, 217 S. 2nd St., #193, DeKalb, IL 60115, 815-748-5359, mwautumn@aol.com.

September 8-10: Sisterspace Weekend in Darlington, Maryland. Music, dance, sports, workshops, speakers, food, and a women of color forum. Sliding scale fee; cabins and tenting available. Contact: Sisterspace of the Delaware Valley, 1315 Spruce St., Philadelphia, PA 19107, 215-546-4890, www.sisterspace.org. August 23 deadline for mailing registration forms.

World March of Women 2000

On October 15, the World March of Women will take place in Washington, DC, with hundreds of thousands of women expected to march to the Mall. The March's purpose is to demonstrate that the majority of the people want to work to eliminate poverty and ensure a fair distribution of the planet's wealth between rich and poor and between men and women; to eliminate violence against women; and to ensure equality between women and men. This will be an international effort. For U.S. information, contact: World March of Women 2000, National NOW Action Center, 733 15th St., N.W., 2nd Fl., Washington, DC 20005, 202-628-8669 (ext. 0), e-mail: march@now.org, www.ffq.qc.ca.

ATMP Seeks Signatures for Affirmation of Family Diversity

By Marshall Miller and Dorian Solot

The Alternatives to Marriage Project (ATMP) is a national organization for unmarried people. The Project provides support and information to people who choose not to marry, are prevented from marrying, or who live together before marriage. It works for greater understanding and acceptance of unmarried people.

ATMP is not against marriage, but it does believe that unmarried relationships also deserve validation and support. People may be pressured to marry by their families, friends, and communities; and they may also face marital status discrimination. The Project opposes this unfair treatment and advocates for the equal rights of unmarried people.

There are over eleven million unmarried people living with a partner in the United States today, and this number continues to grow. Millions more are not currently in relationships or do not live with their partner,

and have no plans to marry. There are many reasons people chose not to get married. Some people, like same-sex couples and those in relationships of more than two people, are not legally allowed to marry.

The Alternatives to Marriage Project is open to everyone, including singles, couples, married people, people in relationships with more than two people, and people of all genders and sexual orientations. The Project welcomes married supporters, who are among the many friends, relatives, and allies of unmarried people.

An excerpt of the Affirmation of Family Diversity is below; the full text and sign up for the statement is online at <http://www.unmarried.org>. **Contact: Alternatives to Marriage Project, P.O. Box 991010, Boston, MA 02199, 781-793-0296, fax 781-394-6625, atmp@unmarried.org.**

Excerpt of the Affirmation of Family Diversity

We believe that all families should be valued, that the well-being of children is critical to our nation's future, and that people who care for one another should be supported in their efforts to build healthy, happy relationships.

One of America's strengths is its diversity, which includes not only a wide range of races, ethnicities, creeds, abilities, genders, and sexual orientations, but also a range of family forms. One family form is marriage, and we agree with the newly-formed "Marriage Movement" that marriages should be supported. What worries us is the mistaken notion that marriage is the only acceptable relationship or family structure.

Well more than one in three American adults are currently unmarried. Policies that benefit only married relationships routinely exclude this considerable percentage of ordinary people, whose lives and families do not fit the married ideal upheld by the marriage movement.

The family diversity that exists in America today includes people who have chosen not to marry and those who are prevented from marrying, such as same-sex couples. It includes people who have chosen to live together before marriage (the majority of marriages today are preceded by cohabitation) and those who are single. It includes older people and disabled people, who may risk losing needed benefits if they get married. And it includes children, half of whom live in a family structure other than their two married parents.

Italian Cabinet Member Comes Out as Bisexual

In early June, a member of the Italian cabinet, Agriculture Minister Pecoraro Scanio, announced he is bisexual during the public debate about World Gay Pride which was held in Rome. In an interview with the magazine *Panorama*, he was asked if he was gay. Scanio, a 41-year-old lawyer from the southern city of Salerno and a member of the Green Party, replied that he is bisexual. "I'm against choosing just homosexuality or heterosexuality in a rigid, old-fashioned style," he said. "Me, I choose absolute sexual liberty."

Panorama asked Pecoraro Scanio if he thought he should be doing more to support the cause of gay rights. "In this moment I'm

busy with an entirely different campaign," he said, "the one against genetically modified foods." He added: "Sexuality is important, but it isn't the central thing in my life."

Scanio joined the Cabinet last month when Giuliano Amato became premier. Amato's opposition to World Gay Pride has divided his center-left coalition and helped stoke a controversy ignited by the Roman Catholic church's attempts to get the week-long World Gay Pride canceled or postponed. Despite the Vatican's contention that Catholic pilgrims would be offended by the sight of queer folk, the celebration was well attended and peaceful.

CALENDAR *continued from page 16*

September 5 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call for topic, 617-354-8807. See August 1st.

September 6 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See August 2nd.

September 9 ♦ Saturday

Bicycle Ride, 10 a.m. The location of this bike ride has not been decided yet. Call Sheeri at 617-629-9516 or Arthur at 617-527-1442 to RSVP or if you have questions or suggestions on where to ride.

September 10 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Potluck Brunch and Book Swap, noon. Meet at Ellyn's home in Somerville. Bring food to share and books you'd like to trade in for something new. And while you are looking over the books, get to know some new people. Call 617-623-5535 for directions.



September 11 ♦ Monday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Biracial, Bicultural, Bisexual." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140 or e-mail to NellyThrustmor@aol.com.

September 13 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. See August 9th.

September 14 ♦ Thursday

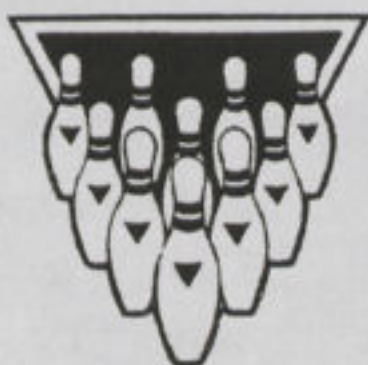
BBWN Introductory Meeting, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Learn about BBWN and what resources there are for bis in the Boston area. Cambridge Women's Center, 26 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 617-354-8807.

September 16 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. We'll brunch at Brookline Lunch, 9 Brookline St., Cambridge. From Central Square, go two blocks down Mass Ave. (southeast, towards Boston), and Brookline St. will be on the right (the side nearest the Charles River). Planning meeting for Oct/Nov calendar will take place right afterwards in the restaurant.

September 17 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Bowling Outing, 11 a.m. Bowl a few games of ten-pin and then we'll head out to some place for some food. Call Ellyn ahead of time to let her know you are interested, 617-623-5535. And bring your best game.



September 19 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See August 2nd.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call 617-354-8807 for topic. See August 1st.

September 20 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space, 7-9 p.m. See August 16th.

September 23 ♦ Saturday

International Celebrate Bisexuality Day festivities will be happening in Boston. Last year's event at the Club Cafe was loads of fun. We're planning another great event for this year's celebration! For more information, call Marshall at 617-927-6032, email mmiller@fenwayhealth.org, or look for updates on the BRC webpage: <http://www.biresource.org>.

September 24 ♦ Sunday

Sunday Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Choose from a variety of Asian food at Ma Soba. Corner of Dunster and Mt. Auburn Streets in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

Bisexual People of Color Potluck, 5-7 p.m. For this gathering, we're letting you select a topic. What did you want to discuss? What did you want to find out? Why did you come? Whether you are Asian, Latino, Native-American, African-American, East Indian, or of mixed heritage, all diverse ethnicities and gender identities are welcome. Bring a dish or beverage to share. This potluck will be at the Boston Living Center at 29 Stanhope Street in Back Bay. Dial 01 at the door to be buzzed in.

September 26 ♦ Tuesday

BBWN Pre-mailing Dinner, 6 p.m. at Bertucci's on Stanhope St., just two doors down from the Bi Office.

BiWomen mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office at 29 Stanhope St. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Join us. Socialize during and after.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

4th Sundays: Bi People of Color Potluck, 7-9 p.m. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. For info call 617-424-9595.

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Thursdays: The Midway Cafe, 3496 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain.

Saturdays: Lava Bar in Kenmore Square, 575 Commonwealth Ave. at the Howard Johnson's.

BiWomen
wants you!!!

SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for *BiWomen*
(sliding scale)

___ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)
___ \$20-\$30 (suggested)
___ \$30-\$100 Extra Special Donor

___ Renewal
___ New Subscriber



NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE (Optional) _____

BBWN, P.O. BOX 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd

Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

3rd Thursdays:

SpeakOut Meeting. 8 p.m., at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope St., Boston. Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45 p.m., theme program starts at 8 p.m. Info: 617-354-0133.

1st & 3rd

Thursdays:

Bi Women's Resource & Support Group. 7 p.m. at the Women's Health Consortium, 29 Vaughan Mall, Portsmouth, NH. For info call 603-431-1669 or contact Sue Corcoran at schmoo@nh.ultranet.com.

CALENDAR

August 1 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Are There Differences Between Dating Men and Women?" Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

August 2 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

August 3-7 ♦ Thursday-Monday

Bi Camp. It's the best outdoor bi event of the year. Camping and relaxing in a beautiful, secluded area in western Massachusetts. If you haven't already registered, it's too late to send in the form. Call Wayne now at 508-699-6612 and ask for special dispensation.



August 9 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. The BRC board meets monthly to work on educational programs, the bi office, the web site, the international bi organizing, fund raising, etc. All bi community members welcome to attend. The meeting is at 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

August 12 ♦ Saturday

Bicycle Ride, 10 a.m. The location of this bike ride has not been decided yet. Call Sheeri at 617-629-9516 or Arthur at 617-527-1442 to RSVP or if you have questions or suggestions on where to ride.

August 15 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-9 p.m. See August 2nd.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Body Image." See August 1st.

August 16 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space, 7-9 p.m. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. Tonight's topic is "Finding Partners." A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for the space. BiSpace is held at the BRC at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston.

August 19 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Gather at Christopher's at 1920 Mass. Ave. in Porter Square. The closest T stop is Porter on the Red Line.

August 20 ♦ Sunday

Naturist Swimming Trip at The Ledges, 9 a.m. We'll be car-pooling to The Ledges, a clothing-optional swimming site in southern Vermont. Meet at the bi office at 29 Stanhope Street in Boston. Nearest T stop is Back Bay on the Orange Line. Bring a towel, something to eat, and sun-screen. Bring your car, if you have one. Offer up some gas money if you don't.

August 26 ♦ Saturday

BBWN End of Summer BBQ at Natalie's in Roslindale, 3 p.m. Bring something for the grill (if you choose) and something to share with others. Hope for good weather so we can eat outside, play frisbee, and take a walk in the Arboretum. Call Natalie at 617-327-0772 for directions.



August 27 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Join us on the patio at Skipjack's on Route 9 near Brookline Village. The Brookline Village stop on the D Branch of the Green Line is just yards away.

August 28 ♦ Monday

Serve Dinner at the Boston Living Center, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Bi community will help serve dinner to Living Center clients. The work is easy, the staff is friendly, the cause is good, and your dinner is free. Contact Wesley at 617-441-3573 or wlt@shore.net to sign up.

August 29 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Social night, call 617-327-0772 for info.

**COME VISIT BBWN
ONLINE AT:**

biresource.org/bbwn

*Learn about BBWN, read snippets
of the newsletter, and find links to
many different bi resources.*

CALENDAR continues on page 15

Bicultural, Biracial, Bisexual



The Adventures of Tri-Bi Woman!

By [REDACTED]

Many of you may remember me mentioning in past issues of *BiWomen* that I come from a very mixed background. I am biracial, bicultural, and bisexual. Something my girlfriend recently coined as being "tri-bi," a term I am proud and eager to accept, and a term my parents would appreciate as I was raised to be proud of who I am. But that doesn't necessarily mean it was always easy.

Growing up in the seventies and eighties wasn't an easy task. At least not for me, the third of six children of a biracial, bicultural, and bireligious couple. Let me start by giving you the logistics: my mother is black, South African, and Roman Catholic; my father is white, American, and Jewish. Now I know some of you may be thinking, "Cool. Awesome. How wonderful," but when you're a little girl walking to and from grade school and being called

Tri-Bi continues on page 6

Complex Lives

By María Christina Blanco

I am glad that *BiWomen* is focusing a whole issue on biracial/bicultural bis, and the connections between our identities. I had not thought too much about the relations of these self-concepts, although I am both myself, until I and another biracial bi woman started Bi-PoC, the Bisexual People of Color social and support group of Boston. I realized that in addition to the two founding members, several other self-identified biracial women attended. I would say there were at least 5-6 of us out of a mailing list that was never more than 25-30, a clearly disproportionate representation. This fascinates me and I am excitedly awaiting the day when actual research is focused on how these two identities intertwine. Until then, I have only anecdotal observations and my own experience to offer. I got a chance to elaborate on these issues last summer at the "Playing Safe With Both Teams: Bisexuality and HIV" Conference, June 21, 1999. This is an excerpt from that speech.

My name is María Christina, but a lot of people call me 'tina, and I've been a volunteer with the Bisexual Resource Center for about three or four years now. I'm twenty-two years old, and I was on the Board of Directors of the Bi Resource Center for a couple of years, overseeing some of their services. Now I co-coordinate a Bi People of Color group. It is a support group that is pretty new. It has been around for the last six months. I was just glad for the chance to participate in this conference because I think it is important for us all to educate each other about what our reality is. I'm really glad that so many people are interested to hear about bisexuality. I myself identify as bisexual.

I always identified as bisexual, ever since I began to come to terms with my sexuality when I was a young teenager. And for me it is a comfortable identity. And I want to also draw some parallels because I also identify as biracial. I'm Latina and white.

It is an interesting thing and I see a lot of similarities. Once I was in the youth drop-in center, the Boston GLASS [Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services], and

Complex continues on page 8

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Gail

Robyn Ochs

Annie Goglia

Andrea

Rosalie

Kate Griffin

Denise

Melissa

Joan

Mary

Steph

Anne

Diana

Abby Stevens

And many more fabulous women! You know who you are!

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The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

Editor's Notes


In this issue, we deal with three different bis - Bicultural, Biracial, and Bisexual. As usual, our contributors have taken a lot of different approaches to the theme and we've expanded again to sixteen pages. Thank you to all the writers for their very personal pieces.

Newsweek's September 18th Special Report on "Redefining Race in America" says that there will be an estimated 1.3 million "intermarriages" in the United States this year. Now, I'm sure that they aren't including the type of marriage that Annie Goglia describes on page 7 between her Italian Catholic father and her English/Scottish Protestant mother, but only one or two generations ago interfaith marriages were just as shocking as interracial marriages in many families and communities.

describes on page 1 some of the struggles her own biracial/bicultural family experienced living in the U.S. and in southern Africa. And even though biracial celebrities such as Tiger Woods and Halle Berry are the darlings of the media, there are still many places where the idea of dating across race or across culture makes people very uncomfortable. (See Tina Blanco's remarks in her piece beginning on page 1.)

And we certainly know that identifying as bisexual makes plenty of people uncomfortable, too. So, the three bis have a commonality in that they make people uncomfortable. Some of our writers make the point that the three bis also bring a wonderful breadth of experience and understanding to their lives that they cherish and can't imagine their lives without. (See articles on pages 5 and 9.) On page 10,

finds herself attracted to another woman who shares her bicultural/biracial background, but decides the third bi is not part of who she is. And Steph Miserlis describes the experience of a third generation immigrant, caught between the "mother" country and American culture.

And there's poetry, film snippets, a browser beat, and some news. Hope you enjoy it. Please drop us a line and let us know what you think about *BiWomen*. 

NEXT IN *BiWOMEN*

The *BiWomen* theme for December/January is:

Bi Youth

What is going on in bi youth organizations? What resources are there? How can the adult bi community act in a supportive way? What was your own youth like, were you aware of your bisexuality?

Deadline: November 13, 2000

FUTURE ISSUES IN 2001

February/March
Creativity

April/May
Transitions

PLEASE SUBMIT TO *BiWOMEN*!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to

NellyThrustmor@aol.com

If you do not want your name published, please tell us.

All articles and art appearing in this newsletter are copyrighted by the authors and artists.



Bountiful BBWN Barbeque

BBWN's August BBQ was held on a fabulous sunny day in Roslindale at Natalie's house. Above are the early arrivals. Later in the afternoon there were over a dozen folks gathered in a large circle, chatting up a storm. At right, Natalie giving rides on her new motorcycle to help raise money for BBWN. Then the group took a walk in the Arnold Arboretum.



Think Ahead to December!!

The December brunch is already scheduled, so mark your calendars now. Robyn Ochs will be hosting the brunch on Sunday, December 3, 12-3 p.m. at her home in Jamaica Plain, which is near the Forest Hills T stop on the Orange line. Please call or e-mail Robyn for directions: 617-495-8476, ochs@bi.org. It will be a nice opportunity to relax and socialize before the onslaught of end of the year holidays. We hope you'll join us. See the calendar on pages 15-16 for our October and November brunches and other activities, too!

Volunteer With BBWN

Volunteer to help serve dinner to the women clients of the Boston Living Center on the first Tuesday of the month. Starting with December 5th, let's get a group of members together and donate an evening of our time to Ladies' Night. Serving begins at 6:00 p.m. and goes til 7:30 or 8:00 p.m. Arrive early and you can have your own dinner first, otherwise you can eat afterwards. If this goes well, we can try doing this every other month, aka bimonthly.

Update on Dear Beth Letter

In our June/July issue, we printed a letter written by BBWN's Lynn Rosenbaum in response to a young teen boy's inquiry about being bisexual. Soon after, July 6th, the letter and a response appeared in the *Boston Globe*. Unfortunately, Beth edited out Lynn's reference to the Bisexual Resource Center and its phone number. Below are what appeared in the newspaper.

Dear Beth:

In response to the bisexual male who wondered if bisexuality leads to a life of hardship: There is another possibility. Being bisexual can enrich your life! As a

bisexual woman, I have been able to tap into a wonderful community of bisexuals and others who don't want to live their lives in narrow categories. Being openly bisexual has brought me friendship, a supportive community, and activism. Most cities have a variety of resource groups that can provide this kind of support.

Happy to be Bisexual

Thank you for the positive view. It is so easy to focus on discrimination and forget that, of course and hopefully, one's sexuality is a source of pleasure, no matter what orientation it is.

Women of African Descent: Reaching Across the Diaspora

Southern Connecticut State University is sponsoring their tenth annual Women's Studies conference on October 6-7 at their campus in New Haven, Connecticut. Besides workshop sessions, keynote speakers will include Barbara Smith, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, and Kate Rushin. There is also a Saturday evening performance by JUCA, a trio of performers including Judith Castleberry, Lovejoy and Debra Kenya McGee whose style blends reggae, rock, gospel, folk and jazz. For more information, contact SCSU's Women's Studies Program at 203-624-0151.

Enough is Enough

By Steph Miserlis

When I was in junior high, I invited my friend Kate to my home for dinner. As soon as she walked in the door, she was welcomed and embraced by my family. We were preparing a typical after-church Sunday meal. The men would yell politics at each other in the living room in mixed American and Greek. The women would prepare the salata, spanikopita, and lamb in the kitchen, chattering, yelling, and laughing. A spicy, warm aroma would fill the house. Energy levels would rise in anticipation of the feast. And levels of yelling would rise too. I remember feeling happy. I looked over to Kate who looked very white and blond sitting at our dining room table amongst our boisterous loud Greek family. She also had a look of panic on her face. She was scared of all the yelling and screaming; she didn't know this was "normal." Then it dawned on me; maybe this wasn't "normal." We weren't the Brady Brunch, Eight is Enough, or even our next door neighbors. We didn't eat hamburgers or meatloaf; we ate a lot of lamb, spicy vegetables, and heavy pastries. We hugged and kissed people, even if we never met before. We readily expressed ourselves. We were excessive, big, and loud.

Everyone else was discrete and dignified. When I would visit Kate and her family, I would be in complete awe of the way the family handled themselves. They would address whatever crisis presented itself in a calm and steady manner. I desperately wanted that kind of interaction in my family. I didn't always want my ears to ring at the end of a loud family visit; I didn't want to feel rattled by some family screaming battle; I didn't want to always yearn for quiet and alone time just to breathe and hear my thoughts. I believe my Mom wanted a bit of that, too. She would revere the well-educated, calm, and articulate New Englander. We heard their praise throughout our lives. And I came to find that realm just as compelling as my

Mom did. We both would put those worlds high up on a pedestal and ourselves much lower.

I felt embarrassed by my lower place, by being slightly different. We didn't celebrate Easter the way 'they' did with the colorful Easter egg hunts, fancy bonnets, and puffy pink marshmallow candied cookies. I desperately wanted to be calm, quiet and discrete, the epitome of my idyllic New Englander-neighbor. To this day, I still feel a deep searing cringe when friends delicately ask me to keep the "enthusiasm" down. I didn't like the way I looked either. I wanted to have long blonde

hair, long fingers, and a long neck. I felt short, stumpy, and wide. I wanted to fit in with the other ninety percent of my school going to CCD and confession. I wanted to be part of the group. I wanted to be feminine, not "hearty."

Yet, despite all the self-doubt, I also felt very comfortable with some of my predetermined choices. I really was very happy not to have to confess anything. I didn't want to eat those pale meals, or pink gooey cookies. I hated hats, let

alone bonnets. And my Easter was fun too. I celebrated by staying up all night and morning with a magical ceremonial lighting of midnight candles, the cracking and eating of deep red Easter eggs, and the devouring of sweet hot tsoudeki bread. I was never in need of company or fun. There were always relatives living with us, or popping by. And a seventeenth cousin twice removed was just as much family as a first cousin by blood. My Dad wasn't reserved. He was proud of his heritage and his family. He would roar with rage, and tear up at the smallest of graces.

I didn't feel like a "true American" like those whose lineage was borne from Mayflower travels. And I didn't feel as American as those whose heritage is made up of one part Scottish, three parts English, and two-fifths Irish. Both my parents are Greek. I remember hearing them tell us that we were "Thoroughbred Greeks" and I would grow to feel proud of that brand. Yet, I simultaneously felt inadequate in that area as well. I was born in Boston, Massachusetts. I couldn't be a true Greek either. Just like I felt



Steph on her first trip to Greece in 1999.

not quite American enough, I didn't feel like I was quite "Thoroughbred" enough.

My growing awareness during my teens of wanting more privacy than my other Greek counterparts, my leftist politics, and, eventually, the questioning of my sexuality, all made me feel outside the Greek culture. I didn't feel Greek enough. I didn't speak the language fluently; my skin wasn't dark. I didn't visit Greece and see relatives twice a year like some of my cousins; in fact, I took my first trip there last year at the age of 37. My parents had Boston accents and they didn't attend the Greek clubs. Feeling betwixt and between, not truly either Greek or American, weighed heavily on me as a child.

Today I've come closer to terms with my messy self-identification and Greek American cultural traits. I'm a mix of quiet and expressive, boisterous and calm, melodramatic and reasonable. I grew up listening to Greek music, but now I also listen to Ella Fitzgerald, Chopin, and Latino music. I go to my friends' Passover and Sukot celebrations. My main diet is not Greek food. I love Indian, and Japanese food, steak, and western omelets.

Now, when friends come over to my home for a meal, it may be sushi or barbecue, but I will always keep to my family's tradition by making it warm, welcoming, and maybe even a bit too loud. ▼

Spiritfest '00



Camp Sister Spirit in Hattiesburg, Mississippi is the site for Spiritfest '00: A Celebration of Spirit for Women in the South. The dates are October 27-29, 2000 and the festival welcomes women of all religious and spiritual beliefs (from agnostics to zen buddhists) to attend. Activities will include singing, drawing, drumming, yoga, storytelling, meditation, bonfires, star-gazing and more. Registration fees range from \$80-95 and work exchange is available. Groups of four or more can get a group discount. Call 662-838-6183 or e-mail spiritfest99@yahoo.com for more information.

A Heinz 57 Mutt

By Elle Thomas

When I first learned of this issue's theme, I thought that perhaps I would not submit an article. After all, what could I say about "biracial" or "bicultural"? Quite a lot, it turned out, once I began to ponder it. While I may appear a pale Caucasian redhead, my genealogy is actually a bit more exotic. My mother's black father was born in Alabama in 1913, the son of freed slaves. My maternal French Canadian grandmother was a descendant of Edward Ruthven, one of the men responsible for double-crossing Mary Queen of Scots, getting her killed, and causing, in part, the loss of Scotland's independence to England. In fact, the Ruthven crest was banned in Scotland until the latter twentieth century, and the only resource of clan lore I have seen with any entry at all for the family noted that the clan Ruthven were known as untrustworthy pirates and thieves. My Australian father's paternal ancestors were Northern European criminals banished to the Pacific colony for their crimes, who married and commingled genes with native Aboriginal women. I've often joked that I am a Heinz 57 mutt, an amalgam of the most despised, deprived, and undesired people on earth.

Genetics isn't the only convoluted area of my heritage. I was born in Western Australia and spent the first decade of my life moving from small village to smaller village on the islands of Oceania and the South Pacific, as the daughter of an anthropologist and a native rights attorney, who were both socialists and atheists. Then I came to the United States and lived in nine states in three years with four of my mother's siblings — all, to varying degrees, Catholic capitalists. I attended an Ivy League college that prides itself on cultivating charity

within the WASPY privileged. And I've considered myself Buddhist-leaning for the past ten years.

Now that I have established my multi-ethnic and multi-cultural credentials, what do I write about how they impact my life? I can no sooner describe what differences my family history made in how I grew to be the woman I am as I could separate how being a 5'4" redheaded tomboy impacted my development. It's simply who I am. I could recount the experience of going to a crowded bakery with my dark-skinned grandfather when I was eleven, and noticing that he was ignored while I was spoken to with respect (until, that is, the clerk realized we were together); of having the lone raised hand during one high school class when the teacher asked if anyone present was not Christian (and being teased and taunted for the next year because of it); and of reading in a personal ad that "no lies, guys or bis are desired."

Judgments, discrimination, and reactions to them (individual and collective) are important aspects of United States culture. No one is immune from their effects. Those who fit into the majority in all areas are rare, since this nation was settled and continues to be settled by diverse and divergent peoples. Few Americans can claim purity on any level. That is one of the reasons that I find discrimination so troubling — the stones are hurled by residents of glass houses. Am I more cognizant of subtle discrimination because of the environment in which I was raised, and the minority status of my adult sexuality? Probably. But who among my audience is a

Mutt continues on page 11

AAUW Sponsors Education Symposium

November 17-18, the American Association of University Women is sponsoring a symposium called "International Perspectives: the Political, Social, and Economic Impact of Education for Women and Girls." Meeting in Washington, DC, policy-makers, scholars, and practitioners will be exploring how women have used their education to become catalysts for change in social, political, and economic arenas in their countries. While global in scope, the symposium will focus regionally on Africa, Latin America, the Pacific Rim, and countries of the former Soviet Union. Registration must be postmarked by October 15, 2000. For more information, visit www.aauw.org/7000/cf.

Tri Bi from page 1

"oreo cookie" and "half breed" by the neighborhood boys, it's not very cool or awesome. Why, it's downright hurtful. And that was just the tip of the iceberg.

As my mother was strongly religious and my father was not, an agreement was made between them that all six of us would be allowed to decide for ourselves what religion, if any, we would practice when we reached an appropriate age to do so. This allowed us to attend both church and temple with our respective parents. Unfortunately, it also opened us up to ridicule and jealousy from other kids in the neighborhood. Some kids were jealous that we celebrated both Christian and Jewish holidays like Christmas and Hanukkah, which later developed into dislike and spitefulness. And some kids were just outright cruel and said that we would go to hell because we weren't baptized, or that God didn't love us because we weren't one religion or the other. Not to mention my own confusion when trying to figure out who was right... the Catholics, who believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or the Jews, who believe that the Messiah is still to come. Couldn't they both be right? And what about all the other religions in the world? If one was right, did it mean the others were wrong? I wanted to know! So, in the summer of '78, my mother decided she wanted us all to be baptized into the Catholic Church. She wanted us to understand and have faith in the same ideas and values she held true.

So, we began Sunday school with all intended purposes to learn and understand the Holy Bible and the Catholic faith. This lasted for several weeks. Until one day, unfortunately, due to forces outside our control (too many questions, not enough faith, hot summer days, local swimming pool, you get the picture) the priest decided that we were not quite ready to take on the Roman Catholic Church as our own. Long story short, we didn't get baptized, and still aren't. Anyway...

In April of '82, my mother was granted the opportunity to return to Southern Africa and teach at a university in an independent state called Transkei. (Unfortunately, this meant splitting up the children. Mom took me, my twin, and the younger set of twins with her, while Dad kept my two older sisters.) When I told my teacher and classmates the news, many of them made fun of me. They would say things like, "Are you going to get a bone in you nose like all the other Africans?" Or, "Hey, are you going to get to swing from trees?" Stupid, ignorant

people! It made me so mad, they had no clue! Most of them had never even been outside of New York State, let alone the U.S. They had no idea how insulting they were being to me and to the rest of my family! Or did they?

Once relocated, I quickly realized that things were very different in Southern Africa than in the States. For instance, in South Africa, apartheid was still in effect, which meant separation of whites and blacks. Fortunately, in Transkei, apartheid was no longer being practiced so we had the opportunity to attend an international school with children from all around the world. However, as the official language spoken in Transkei, as well as South Africa, wasn't English, but a language called Afrikaans, we were required to learn and pass Afrikaans in order to pass our grade. I was often picked on for knowing only English. Most of the kids there knew at least two, if not more, languages. So, in order to fit in, I had to work my butt off and learn enough Afrikaans to pass without being put into that special class for the "dumb Americans." Which I did! Which sort of made me bilingual at the time. But anyway...

With apartheid in full swing in South Africa, being both certainly didn't help me understand and accept things any easier either. And when my father and two sisters came to visit, we had a hell of a time figuring things out. Before, when we would visit my mother's family in South Africa, it was a little easier. Mom was black, so we went where Blacks could go. But with dad around, it was so confusing! Which way did we go? Where did



Natalie, her five sisters, and her parents in 1976.

we go? Who did we go with? I remember when the six of us, all of which at the time were too young to go alone, had to go to the bathroom and we started crying cause we didn't know where we were allowed to go. Well, it ended up with dad taking a few, and mom taking the rest. Being a biracial family sure was crazy!! And it didn't get much easier from then on either.

In high school, I remember having difficulty finding a boy to ask to one of our high school dances. This was one of those "girl asks boy" dances, and I had two weeks left before the dance, with no one in mind. This one afternoon, I was hanging out at a friend's house going over a class list, when her mother came in and asked what we were doing. Gretchen explained that we were trying to find me a date for the dance, and her mom just started blurting out all the names of the black boys in our class. Not one white boy, but all the black boys. It was the wildest thing!! What was worse was that I didn't even know most of them due to the way our class was split up! We had one black guy in our classes, and the rest were all white! I wasn't

going to ask someone I didn't know! I was just blown away that Gretchen's mom would suggest such a thing. It was okay for me to hang out with her white daughter, but dating a white boy wasn't?! That was the first time that prejudice really looked me in the face. And boy what an ugly face it has!

About four years ago, I came out to myself, and later to my family and friends, as bisexual. It felt natural and fit like a missing piece of a puzzle into my life as a biracial, bicultural woman. Growing up, my parents instilled their beliefs and values of acceptance for who I am, who I continue to become, and acceptance for all those around me, regardless of race, gender, age, and religion. I have been extremely fortunate to have the ability to look back on my life and reflect in its wonders. I believe that my diversity and open-mindedness has allowed me to overcome obstacles in my life that I may not have been able to do without knowing first-hand what it was like to be an outsider; to be of mixed race, cultural, religion, and sexuality. I am proud of who I am, who I am becoming, and I am proud to be called a "tri-bi!"

Women's Health: As We Grow Older

The Teresa and H. John Heinz III Foundation is sponsoring "Women's Health: As We Grow Older," a free one-day conference on Friday, October 13, 2000. Speakers will deal with topics such as tobacco, environmental effects on estrogen, osteoporosis, memory loss, heart disease, and depression. Mail, fax, or e-mail your registration information (name, address, phone numbers) to: Heinz Family Conference, Regina Villa Associates, 59 Temple Place, Suite 406, Boston, MA 02116, fax 617-357-1018, HeinzReg@rvaincboston.com.

Bicultural Déjà Vu

By Annie Goglia

A Protestant woman marrying an Italian-American Catholic man? Shocking! Not anymore. But in 1948 when my parents wed, it was still uncommon. My mother, Helen, grew up in a downwardly mobile, middle-class, Protestant (Presbyterian), very proper, Mid-Western family. Her father, Carl, was Scottish-American and grew up in rural Vermont. His family had emigrated from Scotland in the 1700's. Her mother, Rosemary, was Anglo-American and grew up in the Chicago area. Rosemary's family had arrived in America in the early days of immigration. One branch of her family had arrived on the Mayflower, not to escape religious persecution like the Pilgrims, but to avoid prison in England.

My maternal grandfather was a free-thinker in some areas (he believed in a world government), but was personally very traditional. He and my grandmother were disappointed in and disapproving of their daughter's choice for a husband. But by then my mother, Helen, was thirty-two years old and had been independent of them for twelve years. They came to the wedding and were polite to their new in-laws, but were never truly accepting.

My dad grew up in upwardly mobile, tightly knit working class Italian-American Catholic family in Syracuse, New York. His

mother, a first generation Italian-American, was born in New York City. She was an only child, adopted from a young unmarried Italian couple. It was considered a shameful family secret that my father kept from us until last year. His father, born in Italy came over to the U.S. as a young man. My paternal grandparents had an arranged marriage-my grandmother was sixteen, and had her first child, my dad, at age eighteen. There would be five children in all, and they all stayed to live and work in Syracuse.

I was born and raised in Syracuse, around my father's family. My dad ended up as an administrative social worker and my mom was a housewife. We didn't have a lot of money, but housing was cheap in Syracuse. When I was three years old we moved from a tiny house in a lower middle class suburbs to a large old house on the cusp between a "nice" middle class and a more modest working class neighborhood in the city. My father's two sisters squeaked into the middle class by becoming elementary school teachers. (In those days you only needed two years of teaching college called "normal school.") His two brothers never went to college and stayed in the working class.

As early as age seven, I knew I was part

Déjà Vu continues on page 13

Big, Big Love

Attend a class by Hanne Blank, author of *Big, Big Love: A Sourcebook on Sex for People of Size and Those Who Love Them*, (and contributor to BiWomen's Body Image issue) on Wednesday, November 8th at Grand Opening, 318 Harvard Street in Brookline. Learn terrific tips for plus-sized intimacy from positions to sex toys, from self-confidence to getting on top, and a whole lot of everything in between. The class will be held 7:30-9:30 p.m., costs \$25 and is open to all. Call Grand Opening for more info and to register, 617-731-2626.

Complex from page 1

someone was just talking to me a little bit, and she said, "You are biracial and bisexual. That is interesting. Bisexuality, I guess, I could understand because I think eventually you make a choice and settle down with a man or woman, and you know what you are. But I don't understand this biracial piece because how could you ever choose between that?" And I thought, wow. To me that really reflects the way I see the world, as pretty segregated, and people just definitely want to see you come down on one side or the other.

And I told her, "Well, I don't really see it that way. I see it that my identity is not about making a long-term choice or not. It is really more about just having to make a choice every minute of every day of my life because you are always presented with a new situation." While the reality is that there is an enormous range of cultural and sexual diversity, it is also true that the prevalent dynamic is that there are two communities out there — whether you are talking about the straight world and then the gay community, or the dominant Anglo culture and Latino community.

And, for me, I do feel comfortable with my sexuality and all the aspects of my identity, but it is a challenge to just go through the world like that because everything that you come across in your life you always have to make a choice: are you going to stand up for who you are in all these different contexts?

And I find that it is like going back-and-forth. One day I feel really straight because I'm in a conference that is mostly for the gay community and I'm the only bisexual and people think that means I'm straight. I don't look like a dyke, I have long hair. That is more of a cultural thing for me. But people will often read me one way or another. People will read me as straight or whatever.

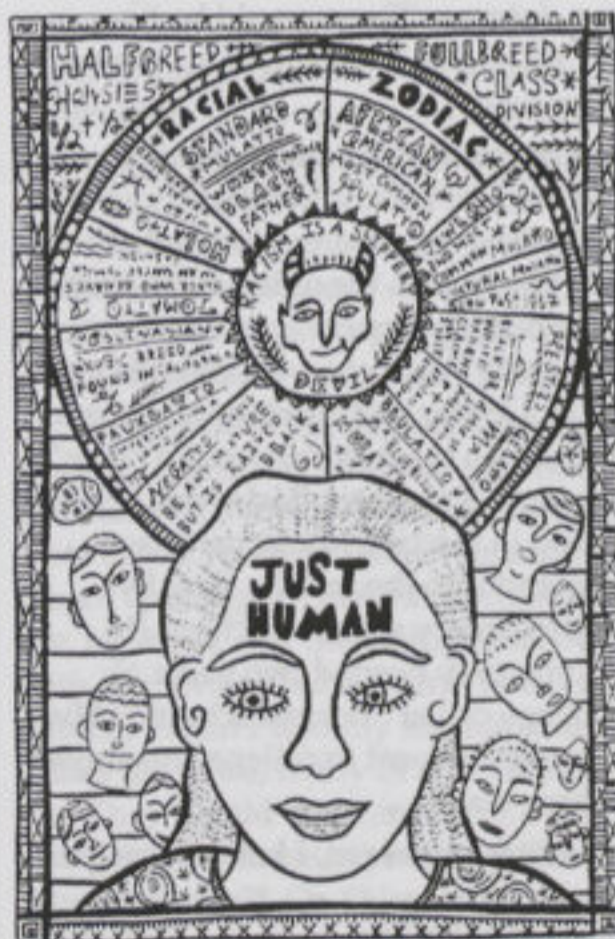
But then I took a dance class this spring and I wanted to learn as the leader. I was the only woman leader, so I was like the big dyke. No women wanted to dance with me. And that was a really awkward situation. And it is probably the same things you experience as a lesbian, going through your life.

And so it is just going back-and-forth a lot. You feel this need to sort of prove yourself — or I do sometimes. And I have to say, I feel kind of nervous saying this to you, because I know so many of you in the audience. But I sometimes feel like I have to prove myself to one community or the other. You know, like the straight community would look down on me when I have a female partner. Or queer world say, "what is she doing here with that guy on her arm?"

And in a way that is also similar to the racial aspect because in the Latino community I'm involved in, people are happy to see me bring in a partner that is also Hispanic. But then my mother's family, which is white and from New Hampshire, would have a hard time with that. They would rather see me involved with an Anglo partner. You can't please

Top Ten Reasons You Might Be Multiracial

By Maria Christina Blanco



- ...You've been read four different ways in the last three hours.
- ...While other people decide what to eat, you're trying to choose which table to sit at.
- ...You feel like a mascot for the National Enquirer ("Inquiring minds want to know...")
- ...The census taker will remember you for a good long while.
- ...You get harassed with ethnic slurs that don't even apply to you (insult to injury!)
- ...You're never "whatever" enough.
- ...You've been told you have an "international face."
- ...Everyone assumes you're adopted.
- ...You've always considered "Please indicate your race" to be an essay question.
- ...You're in an interracial relationship...with yourself!



'tina and her daughter Maya.

everybody, and it is a challenging thing to go through life like that.

That is my basic experience with

bisexuality: you need to be sensitive to people who live very complex lives. And I always appreciate it when I come into contact with people who don't make that assumption about me, who accept me, and who continue to check in with me and realize I have a self-identity. I do feel that I'm bisexual, and that I may act on it in different ways. And they just respect that. And I appreciate that. ▽

'tina Blanco, the daughter of a white American mother and a mestizo Latin American immigrant father, was born and raised in the United States. Self-identified as bisexual since her early teens, 'tina moved to the Boston area where she became involved with the Bisexual Resource Center (BRC) as a Board member and Treasurer. 'tina is also the co-founder and current coordinator of the Bisexual People of Color group (Bi-PoC, pronounced bi-posse), which holds a monthly drop-in discussion and potluck event.

Out All Night

October 14-15, Safe Homes of Central Massachusetts is sponsoring "Out All Night," a conference to benefit homeless GLBTQ youth in central Massachusetts. The conference will be held at Union Station, 2 Washington Square, Worcester. The Safe Homes programs include foster care, mentoring, and a drop-in center in collaboration with YOU, Inc. (Youth Opportunities Upheld, Inc.). For info call Al Toney, 508-853-0430 or e-mail: Safehomesma.org.

Growing Up Biracial

Black, white, Jewish, South African, biracial, multicultural, mulatto, mixed, half and half, yatta, yatta, yatta. Why is it that I am always asked to identify myself to others, and why do they really care? Growing up in today's society I thought that everyone was a little bit of something. You have Irish-Italian Americans, Russian-German Americans, Spanish-Puerto Rican Americans, and the list goes on. So why do people find it so fascinating when a couple from two opposite hues on the human spectrum of colors mix? Why is it that our society concentrates more on the "black-white" mixes, and acts as though we are such an odd phenomenon and that there is no true place for us in society?

Growing up I have had to, no, been forced to question my mixed cultural identity over and over and over again. I was not only expected to figure out who I am in the grand scheme of things, but was then expected to justify my finding to everyone else who thought they had a right to know who I am. I have been put in uncomfortable and compromising situations while hanging out with some "white skinned" people who somehow missed the fact that I am half black and thought it was okay to use racial slurs and toss out the word "nigger" like it was an adjective. I have been ridiculed by jealous women who would use my "lighter skin" and "good hair" against me as if I am the one who asked to be born this way. I have been interrogated by black men as to why I am not dating black men when, in fact, they just want to get into my pants. And I have had to endure the friends with parents who, while growing up, didn't want their good Italian or

By Renata Rivkin

Jewish daughters hanging out with black kids, "but the Rivkins are okay."

So, you want me to tell you what it is like growing up biracial? Well, I can tell you that it is the best and only experience I have ever had the privilege to have and I would not change it for the world. While at times I feel as though I don't truly belong to any one group, I have realized and accepted that I don't, and I never will, nor do I want to. But that is the beauty of it. I belong to two groups. Actually, since more times than not others can't tell what my ethnic makeup is, I belong to what ever group they perceive me as belonging to, and I really like that.

I feel like I can assimilate into any group that I am exposed to, and there is something wonderful to be said for that. I have been free (well, for the most part) to date anyone of any color that I wished to date (and oh how I did) and was not stigmatized for it. I have been able to walk down streets in Southern California, Mexico, Latin America, the Middle East, Jamaica, New York City and so on, and most people just thought I was "one of them." I really enjoy being so diverse looking that people just stare and wonder. I really just love being me. I have been asked more times than I can count (literally), "What are you?" by all sorts of people, and you know what... I have come to like that now, too.

I truly believe that most people are just genuinely curious as to what my cultural background is. And perhaps they are just looking for a reason to approach a beautiful woman they see standing on the streets (hey, not that way!) and just want to talk to me. Will I ever blend into society completely? I sure as hell hope not! ▽

Mixing Business With Pleasure

The Fifth Annual Greater Boston Business Council (GBBC) Expo and Entertainment Festival, "Mixing Business With Pleasure," will take place on Saturday, October 21, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. at the Boston Center for the Arts Cyclorama. With approximately 100 exhibitors, entertainment, and a series of informative seminars (i.e., building a wine collection, starting your own business), the day is designed for people to reach the GLBT market. For more information, call 617-236-4222, or visit www.gbbsc.org/.

Meeting Maisha, Meeting Myself!

By [REDACTED]

I couldn't help but notice her soft, brown, tight curly hair; the way her silky caramel complexion lit up as if the sun were shining on it. I couldn't help but notice the way her big brown eyes slanted upward aiding to her already exotic look. I also couldn't help but notice the way she gently threw her hair back and then glanced at me with a bright sparkling smile.

It was a Thursday evening, and that meant another meeting with the women's group on campus. This was only my third time attending, so I was still getting to know the other members. I remember this particular girl that I sat across from, her face not but five feet from mine, who had an unusual look about her. It was so beautiful and peaceful that I couldn't help but notice her.

She too was noticing me. We would exchange a friendly smile every now and then. I felt her staring at me when I would turn my head to face whomever was speaking, but I thought she was just trying to figure out "what I was." You see, I am, what my twin sister and I coined, SAMEA. South African, Middle Eastern (Israeli), American. And even within the South African part of me is a big mixture. And what a beautiful mixture it does make!

We had a chance to talk when the meeting ended. We came to learn that we both have the same racial and religious/cultural make-up: black/white and Jewish/other. I enjoyed talking with Maisha as it was helpful to befriend someone who shared similar life experiences.

It's weird how you never see someone around campus and then when you do meet them you start to see them all over the place. Well, that is how it is for me. The next day I just happened (and I say happened because it was not an every semester occurrence) to be walking to the library when I ran into Maisha. We exchanged a few words. And in that short period of time, I couldn't help but notice that she had looked me up and down about five times. "That's strange," I thought to myself. "Am I just being too vain and imagining things or is this girl checking me out?" As I turned to walk away I decided, "No. It must be me. She's just checking out my outfit. Girls do that." Oddly enough, I ran into her a few hours later in the campus center. Again, she was checking me out. My decision changed, "Well, she already knows what I am wearing, so it can't be that. She must be checking me out!"

I never questioned my sexuality before...until later that night. Catching a buzz under the stars, I couldn't get my mind off of Maisha. She was indeed a beautiful young lady. Could she be a lesbian? She didn't look like a lesbian (whatever that means!). There is a saying, "Ask and you shall receive." And an answer I did get.

In the middle of the next week, I ended up having lunch with Maisha in the BiGL Office. It was just the two of us. Maisha said she wanted to talk more about being biracial, bicultural and what I was later to learn, about her being bisexual. As she continued to flirt with and flatter me, Maisha jumped at the opportunity to ask, "Have you ever thought about being with a woman?"

I had never seriously thought about it. Maybe because all the gay women I had met where "butch" looking as well as unattractive to me. But now here was this attractive girl propositioning me. And I began to explore the possibility. The more I talked to Maisha, the more it seemed like she was somehow convinced that I was gay. I guess it didn't help that two days after we met, I shaved my longer-than-shoulder-length hair completely off and now had that "gay look." And I say that because it is amazing how many women started hitting on me after that. Regardless, I thought that for most people, being gay was something that had long been in the making. You see, my sister had just told me that she thought she was bisexual and she had been trying to figure things out for some time now. That it just made sense to her that being biracial and bicultural, being bisexual would naturally follow. And that she was currently spending time with a woman from grad school "testing the waters." So, naturally, the more Maisha questioned me and tried to sway me, the more confused I became.

"She IS very attractive...but could I be with her sexually...? If I were to be with a woman, I would want her to be that woman." I became so confused that I ended up telling my boyfriend/lover/confidante that I didn't know what I wanted anymore from our relationship. But what I did know was that I wanted to take Maisha up on her offer to spend the night hanging out together. What could he say? My mind was made up.

Well, the time came. I went over to her off-campus apartment. We caught a buzz, drank a few coolers, and goofed off. Her

female roommate and her girlfriend entertained us with a very sexual dance and that's when I knew. I knew where the night was going to lead. It was now late and time to crash. I climbed into the queen-sized bed and felt my nervous heart beat. What am I doing? Maisha gently talked to me and slowly made her way over to me. She gently, no tenderly, kissed me on the lips. It was the softest kiss I have ever felt. As she slowly rubbed her finger up and down my arm, I could feel the softness of her fingertips and the slight brush of her nails. All I could think was, "This is a woman. She's not rough or tough like a man. Her hands are not

heavy with a man's weight. Her lips are not outlined with that five o'clock shadow. This is a Woman!...but, this isn't for me."

What *was* for me was the lesson I learned from it. I came to realize that for some people different mixtures work. It works for me being biracial. It works for me being bicultural. It even works for me being the sister of a woman who is bisexual. I have learned to allow people to be who they are. People do what works for them and the rest of us just have to learn to accept that. Well, it sure would make life a lot easier and happier! ▼

FILM SNIPPETS

A *imee & Jaguar* is a German film about the true love story between Lilly Wust, an Aryan German woman, and Felice Schragenheim, a Jewish resistance fighter who met and fell for each other during the bombing of Berlin in WWII. Felice is also a lesbian who appears to have many lovers and has adopted a somewhat reckless way of getting through life. Lilly is a Nazi hausfrau who needs the attention of male lovers while her military husband is away at the front. When they meet through Lilly's housekeeper, Ilse, they become friends and soon Felice introduces her to a large network of lesbians who love to dance, drink, and fight for the resistance (unbeknownst to Lilly). The film centers more on the love and the issues of war and less on the obvious bicultural issue, which, nonetheless, leads to a fairly obvious tragic ending. It is wonderful to see a film where the main characters are women in love with each other *and* the rest of the plot has a lot of depth to it.

East is East focuses on the complexities of an interracial/intercultural relationship and the biracial/bicultural children of a Pakistani-English family living in northern England in the seventies. The Pakistani father, who left his country and married an English woman early in his own life, is dismayed that his own six children would rather eat sausages and date their white English peers than spend their time at the mosque and live in arranged marriages. The mother tries very hard to allow her children to experience the joys and responsibilities that come to them from both of their cultures, but her tendency to hide these experiences from the father ultimately sets him up for a rude (and violent) awakening to his children's bicultural reality. Eventually, his frustration is vented on the mother, which

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

provokes the children to take a stand for her and for themselves. *East is East* deals with a lot of difficult bicultural dilemmas, yet it also shows a lot of humor in the situations, too. On the whole, the balance works, but in a few instances the humor feels like it is at the expense of the characters. ▼

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stranger to being outside the norm? You are women, you are queer; include economic class, religion, skin color, and profession into the equation, and I imagine that many descend even further from the apogee of the dominant paradigm that is white, male, Protestant, well-traveled, excessively-educated, and moneyed.

Regardless of cultural and racial background — mono, bi, or multi — anyone can take offense at intolerance, and I believe everyone should. I do not mean to suggest replacing the current climate of oppression for a compulsive and rigid politically-correct atmosphere. However, I do believe in eradicating ignorance. I am not a Gypsy, yet I take exception to the word "gypped"; neither am I Native American, but the term "Indian giver" is not part of my vocabulary. The removal of ethnic slurs in our language is one form of showing respect for others.

I am open to relationships with not only both men and women but all people, of any ethnicity, from any culture. If being multi-racial, multi-cultural, and bisexual has contributed to this openness, I am very, very grateful to be a mutt. I suspect, however, that this openness stems less from these subdivisions than from my inclusion in another category — humanist. ▼

National Coming Out Day!

October 11th is National Coming Out Day and different campuses and communities around the country will be marking this day with visibility actions. To mark the day, the Sundance Channel is showing two films dealing with gay life. *Edge of Seventeen*, a film about an Ohio boy's coming of age in the early eighties, will air at 9:00 p.m. *Family* is an award-winning short film about Stephen Patrick Foery's coming out experiences from the ages eighteen to twenty-two and it will air at 10:45 p.m.

Concerned About Your Drinking?

A free support group is forming for women who may be concerned about their own drinking. It will meet for twelve Tuesdays at the Women's Center in Cambridge. You do not have to define yourself as addicted, alcoholic, or chemically dependent in order to participate. The group will be facilitated by a trained group worker who is a licensed social worker. It is a part of a research project on women-centered groups, conducted by a faculty member in the School of Social Work at Boston University. Participants will be paid \$25 for pre- and post-group interviews. Call Christine Flynn Saulnier at 617-353-7720.

My Journey from Straight to Bi-curious to Bisexual

By Rosa Carson

For the first twenty or so years of my life, I didn't have a lot of questions about my sexuality. I felt pretty settled in the standard heterosexual identity, but I hadn't ever stopped to give it much thought. All of my high school crushes were guys, and while I could appreciate the appeal of women, I didn't really think they did much for me.

At some point late in my time at college, I started spending more time with people whose sexualities are best described as progressive and fluid. Their comfort with their own and other people's broad spectrum of sexual orientations and experiences allowed me to break down my thinking around my own explorations. What had been a tiny seed of "well, maybe I could see getting involved with a woman," became a more fully fledged form of bi-curiosity.

For about two years, I identified as bi-curious. I didn't have any women in my life who made me want to take that any farther, and although I developed a couple of crushes, they didn't go anywhere, and petered out quickly. It was only in the spring of this year that I found myself attracted to a woman in a more serious way.

She and I met through my semi-ex when the two of them were flirting. We all ended up at the same sci-fi con, which actually caused a bit of psychodrama, but it all worked out. She worked near me, and we decided to get together for lunch to clear the air after the blowup. A few lunches led to a few dinners and movies and general hanging out. I realized I had a crush on her early on, but I felt very hesitant about bringing it up with her. I didn't know where along the spectrum my bisexuality was, and I didn't want to lead someone on, or to mislead her. For all I knew, we would get started in a romantic relationship and I would find myself balking at some of the more, uh, advanced activities that might take place. I might even find myself completely uninterested in carrying the relationship further. I didn't want to start something when I didn't know that I would be able to carry through. On top of that, we were building what promised to be a very close friendship, and I worried about screwing that up. So I decided that I would sit back, enjoy the crush and focus on building our friendship.


Happily, she didn't have the same kind of wait-and-see attitude. After a week or two of

pondering whether and how to say something to me, she sent me e-mail, saying essentially what I would have said if I had had the nerve to do so.

So now that I've been doing the same-sex relationship thing for a couple of months, I'm finally getting around to writing about it. I'm incredibly happy with things, but I think I have to credit the individual(s), not the gender, with that.

The most common question I've gotten is, "Is it hard to get used to being sexual/physical/romantic with a woman?" And, really those are three questions wrapped into one. The quick answer is that I've been rather surprised at how easy and comfortable I feel about the whole thing. I'm generally a relatively touch-feely person with people I know, so being physical and cuddly with a female partner hasn't been strange. And in some ways, I've had romantic feelings toward non-romantic friends at times — it's a general warm, fuzzy feeling of caring to me. So that wasn't a big question. But the sexual end of things? That was a bigger question for me. Again, it's felt really natural. If I were to step into my life right at this moment without any knowledge of what came before, there would be no question about my sexual orientation — the bisexuality would be obvious. Which, I have to say, makes me happy, because nothing feels forced. In some ways, I'm still working through some built-up crust from social expectations and such, but, basically, where I am at this point in my life feels incredibly natural.

Are there things that are different about dating a woman than dating a man? Well, sure. But, again, I don't know how much of that has to do with gender, and how much with the individual. I can say that I feel like there's less mystery around the physical, and I think we relate much more smoothly than I often have with male partners. Do I like dating a woman more than a man? In some ways, sure. In other ways? Well, let's just say I'm not planning to give up on men any time soon.

It just goes to show that people change. And I'm inexpressibly glad that this is true. 

Come to the next mailing of the newsletter, Tuesday, November 26th. It's a great place to meet other folks, pitch in, and get to know BBWN. See calendar on page 16 for details.

Browser Beat: By Ellyn Ruthstrom

Two resources this month concerning biracial/multiracial web sites of interest.

pages.prodigy.net/walhol/index.html

This is the site for New People: Your Interracial E-magazine which has interracial web greeting cards, stories, movie and book reviews, and photos.

www.multiracial.com/

The Multiracial Activist covers civil liberties, issues of interest to biracial/multiracial individuals, interracial couples/families and transracial adoptees. This site believes it is everyone's right to self-identify in any racial category or to choose no racial identity, supports transracial adoption, and believes in fighting hatred and bigotry, regardless of the color of the bigot.

Same Sex Marriage OK in The Netherlands

The Netherlands has enacted a bill converting the country's "registered same-sex partnerships" into full-fledged marriages, complete with divorce guidelines and wider adoption rights for gays. Proponents say the legislation will give Dutch gays rights beyond those offered in any other country. The vote passed 109-33, and some of the scores of witnesses in the packed public gallery applauded and embraced.

"I'm very happy. What happened today represents changes in our society," said Mark Wagenbuur. He said he and his partner, who came with him to watch the vote, will now formally wed, but their immediate problem is "we don't know who should ask whom."

All three parliamentary factions in the governing coalition — the left-of-center Labor Party, the Liberal VVD and the smaller Democrats 66 — backed the proposal. Even a few members of the biggest opposition party, the largely traditional Christian Democratic Alliance, or CDA, expressed support.

The plan hasn't been recognized by the dominant Protestant or Roman Catholic churches, but a few breakaway churches have sent encouraging letters to legislators. The Remonstrant Brethren, which broke from the Protestant church in 1619, was one step ahead of the Dutch parliament, having accepted gay marriages in 1986. ▽

Déjà Vu from page 7

of two very different worlds, and yet didn't feel fully of either. I was acutely aware of differences in class, status, religion, race and ethnicity. I was middle-class, but with limited financial resources and working class relatives. I was raised Catholic, but always felt a little separated from it because my mother was not Catholic. I stopped believing in Christianity when I hit adolescence, but kept up the outward appearance of being Catholic to avoid my family's disapproval. I was used to hearing my father's relatives speaking Italian, but I never learned to speak it. I was proudly Italian-American and proudly Anglo-American, but didn't really "look" like either. With my mother's family and with our WASP neighbors I felt "ethnic" and different. With my Italian-American relatives and family friends I felt not "ethnic" enough and different.

When I came out as bisexual in my twenties, the response I received had a vaguely familiar feeling to it: not heterosexual enough for the straight world, but not queer enough for the lesbian world. Things have loosened up considerably in our society on all these fronts — religion, ethnic background, and sexual orientation. It's becoming easier to celebrate and enjoy all the diverse aspects of myself. Growing up, as I did, was a challenge and a gift. I have the ability to see complexities and gray areas. The more fully I can accept myself, the more that empathy, understanding, and seeing different sides to an issue come easily to me because of my bicultural experiences. I actually do rightfully and fully belong in all my worlds. ▽

Two Mothers Win Right to Be On Birth Certificate

On June 26, the Massachusetts Probate Court ruled that the names of two women could be listed on the birth certificate for their new son. The child was conceived through invitro fertilization of one woman's egg and an anonymous donor's sperm. Then the embryo was implanted in the other woman's womb and she gave birth to their son on June 21. At the two women's request of the court, the category of father was removed and both women were designated as mothers. At this point, this would only apply in cases where both women are connected to the child either by birth or by biology.

"This is a decision that was made in the best interest of the child. It gives the child the protection of having both women as parents with all the rights and responsibilities," said the women's lawyer, Joyce Kauffman. ▽



Cultureshock is a series of monthly events that features emerging women artists, performers, writers, and activists from the local community. All events are held at 7 p.m. on the second Friday of every month at New Words Bookstore, 186 Hampshire St., Cambridge. October 13: The Dangers of Empathy, a mother-daughter performance about mental illness; November 10: Organizing Across Cultural Differences; December 8: Women & Film.

Revolutionary Voices

Also at New Words Bookstore, on Saturday, November 4 at 3:00 p.m., a group of queer youth will share their prose, poetry, artwork, letters, diaries, and performance pieces. After the reading there will be an open mic. These young voices will explore how race, class, ability, age, religion, and culture intersect with gender, sex, and sexuality.

Best Foot Forward



Swing and ballroom dances will be held for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and their friends on the first Saturday of the month this fall with Best Foot Forward. November 4, December 2, and January 6 of the new year, classes will be held at Ballet ETC Dance Studio in Brookline. The dances are \$7 and no partner is necessary. Beginner's swing lesson is at 8:00 p.m., dancing to DJ is 9-11:30 p.m. Call 617-364-7202 for information, or visit www.havetodance.com/bestfootforward.

Poetry

READ THIS OUT LOUD

By Abby Stevens

Sometimes I'm depressed but not really
sometimes I'm just sad
sometimes I'm just tired
sometimes I'm tired but I'm really depressed
sometimes I use the word sometimes too much
sometimes I don't give a shit
sometimes I'm a poet who rhymes
times rhymes with rhymes
sometimes I laugh too much at myself
sometimes I don't laugh enough
Rap rap rap rap rap rap rap
Wrap this rap around myself
wear it like a national anthem
the American flag
in my mouth
I am chewing
I am spewing
and there's there's nothing you can do cuz
sometimes I just need to say something
sometimes I just need to say nothing
sometimes I just need to get the juices flowing
sometimes I need to breathe
sometimes I need to look at myself in a mirror
sometimes I need to say "I" a lot to remember who I am
And sometimes I want you to know who I am
I will not go to you to find out who I am
My friend
If I left that to you, I might be disappointed.
worse
I might not be.

The Married Man

By Abby Stevens

He ran faster than wet mascara
As I smiled like Scarlet O'Hara.
Knowing eyes of blue and green
Knew nothing about it was serene.

"IT" is the chemistry between us two,
Of cells and pheromones drawing me to you.
The "HE" in this poem is like a ghost
And his flesh and bone, a most beautiful host.

If this chemistry is only in my soul
Then I'm just trying to fill a hole.
His heart I do not want to own,
But a kiss,
But a kiss,
Just one kiss...



SHE

By Denise

They'll never admit it
How much we have to offer
COLLABORATION
PARTICIPATION
with the "other" nation.
She.
The ray of the sun.
The anchor to the ship.
The blossom on the vine.
Let's start anew for a more productive world.
RECOGNIZE
Woman-her strengths
Qualities of life
Nurturer for all.

La Red
The Network

para Lesbianas y Mujeres Bisexuales Maltratadas
for Battered Lesbians and Bisexual Women

617.423.7233 (V/TTY)
Linea de Crisis
Grupo de Apoyo
Refugio de Emergencia

617.423.SAFE (V/TTY)
Hotline
Support Group
Emergency Shelter

Todos los servicios son gratis y confidenciales.



All services are free and confidential.

CALENDAR *continued from page 16*

November 7 ♦ Tuesday

Election Day, Get out there and vote for someone!

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call for topic, 617-354-8807. See October 3rd.

November 8 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. See October 11th.

November 9 ♦ Thursday

BBWN Introductory Meeting, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Learn about BBWN and what resources there are for bis in the Boston area. Cambridge Women's Center, 26 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 617-354-8807.

November 12 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Potluck Brunch at Linda and Maura's in Arlington, noon. Please join us for a festive fall brunch. Warm your tootsies by a crackling fireplace, savor a bowl of hearty winter stew, and enjoy the company of friends, new and old. After brunch we can take a leisurely walk along the bike path or around nearby Spy Pond. For info or directions call 781-777-1146

or email lindab@shore.net. Please bring a potluck dish or beverage to share. All women welcome.



November 13 ♦ Monday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Bi Youth." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140 or e-mail to nellythrustmor@aol.com.

November 15 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space, 7-9 p.m. See October 14th.

November 18 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Brunch will be at Doyle's at 3484 Washington St. in Jamaica Plain, between the Green Street and Forest Hills T stops on the Orange Line. Planning meeting for December/January calendar will take place right afterwards in the restaurant.

November 19 ♦ Sunday

Bi People of Color Potluck Brunch. This month's gathering is a TBA event. Whether you are Asian, Latino, African-American, Native-American, East Indian, Carribbean, biracial/mixed heritage, all diverse ethnicities, and gender identities are welcome. Let's get together and connect!! Call John at 617-983-8788 or email vines@eudoramail.com. Leave a message for info or to make a suggestion.

November 21 ♦ Tuesday

Thanksgiving Serving for the Boston Living Center at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston. Join a large

COME VISIT BBWN

ONLINE AT:

biresource.org/bbwn

Learn about BBWN, read snippets of the newsletter, and find links to many different bi resources.

group of volunteers as they serve a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner to the clients of the Boston Living Center. If interested in volunteering, call Ellyn at 617-623-5535. She will have details in early November.

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See October 4th.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call 617-354-8807 for topic. See October 3rd.

November 28 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. We will congregate for Dim Sum at the China Pearl Restaurant at 9 Tyler St. in Boston's Chinatown. Nearest T stops are Chinatown on the Orange Line or South Station on the Red Line.

November 26 ♦ Tuesday

BBWN Pre-mailing Dinner, 6 p.m. at Bertucci's on Stanhope St., just two doors down from the Bi Office.

BiWomen mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office at 29 Stanhope St. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Join us. Socialize during and after.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

4th Sundays: Bi People of Color Potluck, 7-9 p.m. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. For info call 617-424-9595.

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Thursdays: Dyke Night at the Midway Cafe, 3496 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain.

Saturdays: Lava Bar in Kenmore Square, 575 Commonwealth Ave. at the Howard Johnson's.

BiWomen

wants you!!!



SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for *BiWomen*
(sliding scale)

___ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)

___ \$20-\$30 (suggested)

___ \$30-\$100 Extra Special Donor

___ Renewal

___ New Subscriber

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE (Optional) _____

BBWN, P.O. BOX 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd

Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

3rd Thursdays:

SpeakOut Meeting. 8 p.m., at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope St., Boston. Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45 p.m., theme program starts at 8 p.m. Info: 617-354-0133.

1st & 3rd

Thursdays:

Bi Women's Resource & Support Group. 7 p.m. at the Women's Health Consortium, 29 Vaughan Mall, Portsmouth, NH. For info call 603-431-1669 or contact Sue Corcoran at schmoo@nh.ultranet.com.

CALENDAR

October 3 ♦ Tuesday

BiHealth Planning Meeting, 5:30-7:45 p.m. BiHealth is a health education program for bisexual people based at Fenway Community Health in Boston. Everyone involved with or interested in learning more about the BiHealth Program is encouraged to attend. Meet in Room 201A at Fenway, 7 Haviland St. in Boston. Nearest T stop is Hynes on the Green Line. E-mail bihealth@fenwayhealth.org or call Marshall at 617-927-6032 to RSVP.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Who, What, Hows of Dating 2000." Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

October 4 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

October 7 ♦ Saturday

Bicycle Ride, 10:30 a.m., *weather permitting.* The location of this bike ride has not been decided yet. Call Sheeri at 617-629-9516 or Arthur at 617-527-1442 to RSVP or if you have questions or suggestions on where to ride.

October 8-15: Women's Week

Women's Week in Provincetown, when the girl/boy ratio swings to the other side, for a change. Activities, entertainment, women from all over the country, what more could you ask for? How about a Women's Music Festival? Friday, October 13 at 8 p.m. at the Provincetown Town Hall there will be a night of women singers from around the country. SONiA, formerly of disappear fear, will be the featured performer, joined by folk-country singer Mary Gautier, the acoustic duo Big Blue Sky, and Edie Carey. Call 1-800-648-0364 for tickets and visit www.womeninnkeepers.com for a complete schedule of events.

October 11 ♦ Wednesday National Coming Out Day!

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. The BRC board meets monthly to work on educational programs, the bi office, the web site, the international bi organizing, fund raising, etc. All bi community members welcome to attend. The meeting is at 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

October 17 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-9 p.m. See October 4th.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "To Label or Not to Label." See October 3rd.

October 18 ♦ Wednesday

Bi Space, 7-9 p.m. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. Tonight's topic is "Finding Partners." A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for the space. BiSpace is held at the BRC at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston.

October 21 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Brunch will return to Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square in Somerville. Always a favorite. The Davis Square T stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

October 22 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Potluck Brunch, noon. Join us for rousing conversations, yummy food, and some good laughs at Lynn's house in Newton Centre. T accessible (Green D Line) Call Lynn for directions, 617-965-5564.

Bisexual People of Color Potluck, 4-6 p.m. We will gather at a member's home in Jamaica Plain. The theme is "Sweats and Socks." People can wear their most comfortable sweats and funniest pair of socks for an afternoon of fun and socializing. Use of an oven will be available. T accessible. For information and directions call John at 617-983-8788 or email vines@eudoramail.com.

October 28 ♦ Saturday

Lucky Seventh Anniversary Party, noon - 7 p.m. Grand Opening, the Boston area's bi-owned sexuality boutique is celebrating it's Lucky Seventh Anniversary and invites all to stop by. A free gift awaits everyone who visits.



Booksigning and Reading, 3-5 p.m. Shariann will be at Pandemonium Books and Games in the Garage in Harvard Square to read from and sign copies of her new book, *Rebel Sutra*. The book has a bisexual protagonist and is published by Tor.

October 29 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Join biversity for great food and good company at the Middle East Restaurant at 472 Mass. Ave. in Central Square, Cambridge. The Central Square T stop on the Red Line is just a block away.

November 1 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See October 4th.

November 4 ♦ Saturday

Bicycle Ride, 10:30 a.m., *weather permitting.* The location of this bike ride has not been decided yet. Call Sheeri at 617-629-9516 or Arthur at 617-527-1442 to RSVP or if you have questions or suggestions on where to ride.

CALENDAR continues on page 15



Queer Youth Theater in Boston

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

T rue Colors: Out Youth Theater Troupe is an educational program of The Theater Offensive, Boston's GLBT theater company that resides at the Boston Center for the Arts (BCA). Created in 1994 as the theater component for Massachusetts's Safe Schools Program for gay and lesbian students, True Colors has developed into a highly visible theater training program for queer youth. Since 1996, True Colors has run workshops for hundreds of GLBT and allied youth, produced successful youth performance slams, programmed a one-week intensive theater summer camp, and performed four different plays at the BCA and for community groups and schools around the state. The age range of the troupe is 16-21 and it has been primarily geared towards high school students, though college level kids are encouraged to become involved.

True Colors performance slams for GLBT and allied youth are held two or three times a year. The

Theater continues on page 4

Bi Youth

Young and Bi: A Teacher's Perspective

By Robyn Ochs

I have had the good fortune to work with bi youth (and gay, lesbian, queer, questioning, label-resisting, ally, and transgendered youth) for close to twenty years, both in the college classroom, and in workshops throughout the U.S. and beyond. One of the biggest challenges of my work is to understand that the experiences of today's students are most certainly unlike my own, and to listen well and hard enough to understand their ever-changing realities. I have learned so much, and I am grateful that I am constantly forced to learn. My students have been my teachers.

What have I learned? How are things the same, and how have they changed? I have asked this question of several Boston area students. In this article, I will share their words, as well as my own.

It's still hard to identify as bisexual. Not as hard, though, as it used to be. Today's youth have access to information and a vocabulary that I could not even have imagined when I was in college. Gay, lesbian, bi, and transgendered students in some parts of the country have some degree of institutional support. Massachusetts is one of the most progressive states in this regard. There are community-based youth groups such as BAGLY (Boston Area Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered & Questioning Youth) and Project 10 East. We also have the Governor's Commission on Gay & Lesbian Youth, and the Safe Schools Program (though its funding has recently been severely slashed). Connecticut, Minnesota, and California are a few of the other states that have some excellent programs. Some states have nothing.

There are books and newspapers available, even in mainstream bookstores such as Borders.

They had *Ellen*, and they still have *Will & Grace*. They have *Ani*.

Probably most importantly, they have the Internet. Gobs of information only a click away! Online queer youth discussions, info galore! Not at all like the furtive trips I took to Webster's Dictionary, or to the card catalog in the library (which, incidentally, until the 1970s listed bestiality but not bisexuality).

Today's young adults seem to understand, much better than people of my generation, that identities are possibly subject to change, that while one's sexual orientation may have something to do with

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Volunteers of the Month

Gail

Robyn Ochs

Lynn Rosenbaum

Linda Blair

Kate Griffin

Denise

Vivienne

Steph

Anne

And the Office Movers:

Arthur

Lucy

Pepper

Alan

Woody

Sheeri

Elena

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Editor's Notes

Remember when you were young? Or maybe you still are. Either way, it is a tough time to make it through and come out (double meaning intended) the other side intact. Being queer doesn't help, but as many of the voices in this issue attest to, it doesn't hurt in the same way as it used to. And that is a very good thing for our community to give ourselves credit for. Our activism over the years is making it a little easier for the youth coming along behind us. But, as the statistics on pages 8 and 10 still point out, there are still plenty of issues to address. I'd like to especially thank Robyn Ochs for contributing to this issue. Robyn has been working with youth and young adults for a long time and it is great to have her words be a part of this issue. She tours the country during the school year and gets out the word on bisexuality in dozens of community each year. Thank you, Robyn, for all that you do for us!

I would also like to point out to you our advertiser on page 4, Athena's by K.C. This is a bi woman-owned business and we really appreciate her support of *BiWomen*. If you are looking for a fun way to get your friends together *and* do some holiday shopping at the same time, call Karen to schedule one of her sex toy parties. I recently held one and all who attended had a great time. From massage oils and eye pillows to vibrators and velcro handcuffs, Athena's by K.C. has a wide variety of products to choose from. Give her a call and tell her you saw the ad in *BiWomen*.

Also of note is that our office has moved down the hall on the fourth floor of The Boston Living Center to a much larger space. Once everything gets pulled together, this will offer us more space to have small meetings and a more inviting space to volunteer within. The office is not currently staffed but next time you are at the center for a mailing or other bi activity stop by and take a look at the new digs. Also, if you have any office type equipment or furniture you would like to donate, please call 617-424-9595 and leave a message about how to contact you.

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

NEXT IN *BiWOMEN*

The *BiWomen* theme for
February/March is:

Creativity

How do you express yourself creatively in your life? Art, writing, photography, fashion, crafts? When do you feel most creative? How creative is your sexlife? Does your sexuality have anything to do with your creativity?

Deadline: January 15, 2001

FUTURE ISSUES IN 2001

*April/May
Transitions*

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

*June/July
Biphobia ~ Bi Positive*

PLEASE SUBMIT TO *BiWOMEN*!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, photos, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to

NellyThrustmor@aol.com

*If you do not want your name
published, please tell us.*

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Second Annual Celebrate Bisexuality Day is a Smash in Boston

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

The Bisexual Resource Center (BRC) of Boston decided to do it up this year with the second Celebrate Bisexuality Day (CBD) on September 23. Fortuitously falling on a Saturday, the BRC Special Events Committee and local bi producer (and spoken word diva) Amatul Hannan presented a celebratory "Fall Bi Ball" that was a great night for all who attended. The Boston bi community was lucky to have a stellar line-up of performers and two kick-ass DJs to keep the dance floor full until closing time. Emceed by Hannan and Marshall Miller, Fenway Community Health's BiHealth coordinator, the performances heated up the evening quickly.

Danielle Carriveau came in from Western Massachusetts to share her spoken word poetry as well as her drag king persona of Dirk Diggler; both were well received by the crowd. Seattle spoken word slammer Shane Luitious swept his listeners away with his high energy work. The Princesses of Porn, Amie Evans and Jean Powers, offered up a lot of humor with their camp singing performances as well as their sexy fiction. Local drag diva Destiny and her dancers warmed up the audience mid-show and then finished off the set with an incredibly



Destiny and her dancers topped off the second annual CBD celebration at the Harriet Tubman House in Boston.

sexy showstopper. Keep an eye on her around town to catch her show.

Along with the performances, the evening was also an opportunity to acknowledge the behind-the-scenes work of several local bi activists. The "Unsung Hero" awards were presented to [redacted] Sabrina Santiago, Arthur Cohen, and Jonathan Urbach for their incredible contributions over the years to the bisexual community. The audience was also introduced to the variety of bi organizations that are available to those in the Boston area: the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, the Bi People of Color Potluck, the Bi Coming Out Group, and the BRC.

CBD continues on page 10

BRC House Party

Carol and Roland Glenn will host a fundraising house party for the Bisexual Resource Center (BRC) on Saturday, December 2, 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. at their home, 76 W. Rutland Square, off Columbus Avenue in Boston's South End. All funds raised at the event will go to support the BRC's work. In 1990, the BRC was the first nonprofit corporation formed to address the needs and concerns of bisexual people, their families, and friends. Since then, the BRC has maintained an office and telephone, published pamphlets and the Bisexual Resource Guide, built a presence on the web at www.biresource.org, and provided access to meeting facilities for bi groups in the Boston area. The BRC has recently moved into a larger office at The Boston Living Center and will publish the Bisexual Resource Guide, 4th Edition in early 2001. The board is also considering hiring a staff person within the next year. Now, more than ever, we need your support! The house party is the perfect place to renew your support for the Bisexual Resource Center. Come enjoy relaxing with a bunch of other bi supportive folks, and help the BRC get off to a great start in 2001! Contact Buzz buzz_harris@yahoo.com or Alan alan@spdcc.com to RSVP or for directions.

CBD photos by Natalie Rivkin



Danielle Carriveau (left) performing her poetry and (above) as the drag king Dirk Diggler.

TEGLY Hiring Tobacco Educators

Tobacco Education for Gay and Lesbian Youth (TEGLY) is a peer leadership program that is part of The Home For Little Wanderers. TEGLY hires and trains GLBT youth and straight allies ages 12-17 to be tobacco educators within their school and communities. Youth work is 10-15 paid hours a week. TEGLY provides tobacco-free events, conferences, and workshops for GLBT youth and allies and we are looking for two or three more GLBT youth to hire as peer educators for this year. If you are interested in applying for a position with TEGLY, call Amy at 617-585-7547 or e-mail HSPTEGLY@hotmail.com.

Theater from page 1

troupe outreaches to area youth who are struggling with the closet and with issues of isolation, honesty, and safety, and they are encouraged to sign up for the slams. Then they are given two hours of theatrical guidance in shaping the pieces they want to present. The slams have a loyal following and usually draw at least one hundred people. Sometimes the slams bring in youth who then go on to do other work with the troupe.


Another part of the program is holding theater workshops with the collaborating organizations' members: BAGLY (Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Youth), MOCAA (Men Of Color Against AIDS), and GLASS (Boston Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services). The students choose which of the three organizations they want to work with and create pieces that address the concerns of that particular group.

When youth join the True Colors Troupe, members receive intensive training in writing, performing, and technical theater, including master classes, field trips, and advanced workshops. Each year the troupe performs at the Theater Offensive's festival and at high schools and community centers around the state. The first three years, the troupe wrote and performed their own work, but in the fourth year they performed an already written piece, *Clear the Floor* by David Valdes-Greenwood. While in production, they rehearse every week and get paid for all public performances.

Lisa Veshecco has been the True Colors Troupe Director for the past two years and directed *Clear the Floor* this past season. Veshecco has directed other youth theater troupes and she has found True Colors to have some unique qualities to it. "With queer youth there is much more of a willing spirit, a reverence for the creative process and less of a self-consciousness when engaging in the work

and with each other. They have a sensitivity and openness that I think they have had to cultivate while they've been searching deeper to find out who they are."

When asked about the sexual identities that the young actors may claim, Veshecco said she has noticed that there doesn't appear to be a rigid adherence to claiming to be "lesbian" or to be "bisexual," the kids are still trying on their new identities. There have also been straight kids in the troupe and Veshecco said this was a great addition to their work. Though she doesn't recall any students specifically identifying as bisexual, she knows that some of the kids have dealt with attractions to both sexes and felt comfortable enough in that setting to acknowledge that. One of the characters in the play *Clear the Floor* grappled with the question, "Why do I have to choose?" and the actors discussed that dilemma.


Veshecco emphasized, "The goal of the troupe is to empower Boston area GLBT youth and, through theater, develop life skills and leadership abilities that will benefit their lives. Strengthening their own artistic voices is integral to that." 

On Friday, December 8, True Colors will be sponsoring their latest performance slam at *Spontaneous Celebrations in Jamaica Plain* (45 Danforth Street, near the Stony Brook Orange Line T stop). Youths are invited to express themselves through poetry, music, dance, performance art, theater, drag, or any other medium. There will be a featured performance by Taz Barnes and Renee Farster of Theater Offensive, will be emcee for the evening. Admission is free. Contact 617-542-4214, or e-mail offensive@tiac.net to register or for slam rules and info.

Show your VISIBILITY with buttons!!

- ◆ If God had meant for people to be bisexual there would be two sexes.
- ◆ I'm bisexual and I'm NOT attracted to you.
- ◆ Racism, Sexism, Homophobia - Recognize the Connections.
- ◆ Bisexual Pride
- ◆ VISIBILITY

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Now I Really Feel Old

By Vivienne Esrig

I feel old. My mother tells me I was born forty — I think she's right. I have always felt like my chronological age was about ten years behind me. I am the only person I know who lies and says they are older than they really are. I've been telling people I'm in my forties for years, I won't be forty for a while. I think a lot about retiring, which makes perfect sense because if I was born forty, then the calendar would put me around seventy-four, a very good age to retire.

Anyway, I say all this to set the stage for what I'm about to tell you. The other night I was on a panel for a class on gender and sexuality; Robyn Ochs teaches it at Tufts University. When she put the request out via e-mail to one of the lists I am on, I quickly volunteered. I have wanted to try public speaking around bisexuality and related issues. So, before I could chicken out, I responded to the e-mail and waited to be told I wasn't what she was looking for. Too white. Too average. Too short. As it turns out, Robyn asked three others and myself to meet her class of undergraduates and talk about our own personal history with bisexuality and what it meant to us. Or didn't mean...politically, socially, whatever. I quickly accepted the invitation and before I could chicken out for real, I battled horrible traffic at rush hour. I was the last panel member to make it and I interrupted the class when I came in and sat down. Not a good start. So, now let me get back to my opening point of feeling old. I truly did not know what it means to feel old until I looked around the room and saw these students. They were kids. Babies. They all looked so young. I am almost twice their age. I am old.

Back to the class. I had thought about what I would say quite a bit, how I would describe my coming out process, what my identity meant to me and what role it played in my life now that I was married to a lesbian. When it was my turn to speak, I started my spiel. It went over like the proverbial lead balloon. My reference to seeing Magenta and Columbia kiss in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* as a groundbreaking moment was met with confused stares. My retrospective realization that I yearned for the episodes of *Batman* with Eartha Kitt as Catwoman was met with dead pan faces and glazed looks. I thought *Rocky Horror* was still cool, I guess it's not cutting edge material any more. These students weren't even born when Kitt first tormented Bruce Wayne in her exquisite leather outfit. It hadn't occurred to me that my trip down memory lane, albeit funny to me, would be lost

on them. I think they were bored. I took some consolation in the fact that it didn't seem to be just me, they appeared unimpressed with the other panelists as well.

Now I don't know how many of these kids identified as bi, but assuming a few did, my impressions thus far of our bi youth was not great. I felt even more old and out of touch with today's reality. This feeling of alienation started to make sense to me when one student told the panel, that in his circle of friends, everyone identifies as bi and nobody has a problem with it. There were nods everywhere. The consensus of the class seemed to be that bisexuality is totally accepted by their generation. It is too bad that us older folks have problems of acceptance and inclusion in our communities, but that in their lives, everything is peachy. They are smarter and more aware, more enlightened. Even one of the panelists who has children agreed that when her daughter in college introduces her, it's as "my bisexual mom" and that it was totally cool with her daughter's friends. Now, in all fairness, there was acknowledgment that being in Boston and at Tufts sheltered these students quite a bit. They heard from the panel, Robyn, and each other that life in other parts of this country is not as simple as it is here. Folks are not nearly as accepting. But for the time being, here in this haven of democratic liberalism, it's safe to be almost anything, including bisexual.

As the class went on, I got more and more comfortable answering questions. I continued as if I had some wisdom to impart. Or at least good opinions. But who was I kidding, this class did not need anything from me. In the end, I was very happy I had done it. It gave me the personal courage to go out and do it again. In fact, I signed up for another panel at Northeastern to speak in front of a campus GLBT group. I wonder what that bunch will be like. So far my personal observations of being bi and young in the year 2000 is that it is a heck of lot easier than when I was their age. I guess it's easier to do and be a lot of things. I wish they appreciated it more. Maybe some do. ▽

BAGLY Seeks Student Interns

The Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Youth (BAGLY), the oldest queer youth organization in Massachusetts, is seeking a graduate student intern for academic credit only to work with Program Manager organizing events and activities for Boston area gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning youth. Must be queer or queer-friendly ally. Must be over twenty-three-years-old. The internship will be ten hours/week, two-three days a week, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. The office is located in downtown Boston across from the State House. Please contact Mi Ok ("me oak") for interview at 617-227-4313 (Monday - Thursday) or at skidding@hotmail.com or miok@bagly.org.



Bi Bi Girrl Anthology

Are you a Bi-Bi Girrl? That is, are you a Biracial Bisexual Girrl? Two editors are creating an anthology to celebrate the unique identity of being everywhere in between: queer, hapa, or mixed (but NOT mixed up!) and empowered. They are looking for submissions of stories, photos, videos, dreams, desires, analyses, rants, and raves. The anthology will be presented at an opening with films, visual art, performance art, and readings in San Francisco and Los Angeles in Fall 2001. Deadline is March 15, 2001. Send all submissions to: Dr. Wei Ming Dariotis, Asian American Studies Dept., San Francisco State University, 1600 Holloway Ave., San Francisco, CA 94132. Or e-mail to WMDariotis@aol.com or geobomb@hotmail.com. Submitted materials are not returnable.

Young from page 1

one's politics, it is not the only determining factor.

I see students much better equipped and willing to work in coalition: gay, lesbian, bi, trans, straight allies. The exact word one uses to describe oneself is less important than it used to be. Angel Vail, a junior at Tufts, says, "I think that being bisexual is accepted much more than it was twenty years ago. This is probably because at that point being gay was not accepted, so you were either 'with us' or 'against us,' and bisexuals were not considered 'with us.' You can see evidence of this in the movie *Chasing Amy*, where her gay friends shun her after she begins going out with a guy. Fortunately, in my group of friends at school it has been accepted. At this point, I feel that I do not have to choose sides, or even figure out what my attraction is. The way that I look at it, if someone that I end up being attracted to is male, that's fine, and if they're female, that's fine, too. I don't need to classify myself in order to fall in love."

There seems to be less of a perceived need for entirely separate space for bi students. Some schools have separate bi support or discussion groups, but these groups generally operate fairly comfortably under the umbrella of a larger GLBT group.

It is also much easier to come out, and GLBT students seem comfortable coming out to their straight friends as well as their queer ones. Many of my students are already out to their families.

Elisabeth Anderson, who graduated from college last spring, stated, "My father identifies as bisexual but only to his partners, I believe (he has never told me, only my mother). When I came out to him he said, 'I don't know what to be more surprised about. The fact that you're in a relationship with a girl or the fact that you're so open about it.' I think the fact that he could never be open about his bisexuality shows the difference in our generations."

Lisa, a senior at Brandeis, points out, "Nowadays, the entire GLB movement is much more 'socially acceptable' because of the pride movement. Visibility, marketing, and doggedness have helped queer people stake a claim in contemporary society."

Now that I've made these generalizations, I need to say that individual situations can be dramatically different. There are geographic trends. More homophobia/biphobia in southern states. More comfort and services in urban areas. Crystal Hill, a junior at Tufts who grew up in a suburban town, says, "Well, I was mostly talked about as a lesbian when I came

out in high school as bi, so I don't know that it's all that much different than it used to be. I believe the exact term was 'damn lesbian slut.'"

Sometimes I am downright bewildered. One week I'll be speaking at a campus where everyone seems to really get along in coalition, and where there is a great sense of community and optimism. Then I'll find myself on a campus where nobody on the entire campus (prior to my visit) is out as bisexual and where people talk about feeling isolated and invisible. Some campus groups are dominated by men, others by women, yet others mixed.

Some groups are in-your-face loud and proud and queer. Others are quiet, avowedly apolitical, and discrete. I keep trying to figure out the recipe, but so far it has eluded me.

Interestingly, I often hear today's college students remark on how different things are for today's high school students than they were for them. Lisa from Brandeis told me, "Support groups on campus! How cool is that. I graduated from high school in 1996 and I remember in 1995 there were three 'out' kids on campus — two girls and one guy — and they were so 'scandalous' that they took out a full page ad in the yearbook and filled it with photos and inside jokes between the three of them....all the rest of the student body just thought that they were the queer freaks. Now there is a support group at my school and I think that GLBT or questioning youth have so many more community resources that high school is less of the cauldron of obscurity that it once was for queer or questioning youth."

And Jennifer Collins, a recent college graduate, wrote, "Things are very different now. When I graduated high school ten years ago, no one was gay, lesbian, or bi. If they were, they definitely did not come out. If they had, a lot of people would have made their lives difficult. My sister graduated three years ago, and there were people that identified as gay, lesbian, and bi in her class, and it was accepted as a perfectly normal option by most of the students in her class."

But, I'm constantly reminded that despite the vast progress that has been made in the past several years, it is still very difficult to identify as gay, lesbian, bi, or trans. I hear stories of harassment, of young people not being taken seriously, of bisexuality being dismissed by others — both friends and parents — as something not real. "You're just saying you're bi to be cool." "You're just a lesbian who hasn't finished coming out." And, of course, schools often participate in making students unsafe — witness the example of the fifteen-year-old transgendered Brockton High School student whose principal went to court to keep her from

coming to school in a dress. The court has intervened, and the child has returned to school, but I can't imagine that child is feeling very safe right now.

To end on an interesting note, one student wondered aloud whether the bi moment has passed: "I think it's easier now than it was 10-20 years ago, but I also think that because bisexuality was more on the forefront of conversation that it might have been a more interesting time to live in. I think we are in more of a trans era now." ▼

Robyn Ochs has been teaching at Tufts University since 1992, and speaking publicly about bisexuality for almost two decades. Her website is www.bi.org/~ochs.

BICON 2001: *The Sacred and the Queer*

BiCon 2001 will take place January 12-15, 2001 at the SunCoast Resort Hotel in St. Petersburg, Florida. Celebrate bisexuality, create bi community, and explore bi consciousness and new ways of organizing. The conference has been organized into three workshop/presentation tracks: Skills Building: yoga, massage, safer sex ed, tantra, sacred sex and sex magic; Bi Theory: discussions of sexuality, love, sex and meaning, polyamory, sexual ethics, and relationships; and Community Building: heart circle, making space for each other, down time, hanging out, getting to know you, pool-side chats, and establishing community norms.

BiCon 2001 will bring together bisexual leaders and activists from around the country to learn from each other and discuss the role of bisexual people in our country and in our communities in the twenty-first century. For the Friday night icebreaker, you are asked to bring at least two childhood photos of yourself and share your growing up bi stories with each other.

The Suncoast Resort is one of Florida's premier gay resorts. Room rates are \$49-89 (And you can stuff up to four people in one room!) Make your reservations early and mention you are with the bisexual conference; space is limited. To make your reservations, call 727-867-1111, or log on to www.suncoastresort.com. Become a Team Captain and have your registration fee waived! If you recruit five other conference attendees and return all six registrations with payment by December 31, 2000 they will waive your registration fee, which is \$45. FAX 305-669-3055, or e-mail at gawen@igc.org, for a formal registration form. ▼

Radical Queer Youth Organizing Nationally

RESYST is a national political and cultural resource for queer activists and educators, particularly young women, youth of color, working class youth, trans youth, and other young people from marginalized communities, working to build a revolutionary movement. "Committed to the eradication of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, ableism, adultism/ageism, transphobia and heterosexism, we are conscious of the complex and harmful manifestations of these systems of domination, which effectively divide our communities. RESYST believes that we must rebuild unity and power through mobilization, education, and cultural expression. Our foundation is based on removing all the multiple and interconnected systems of oppression."

RESYST has a Training Board that is a national network of queer youth activists who are trained to present RESYST workshops as well as author their own. RESYST holds workshops and trainings all over the country. RESYST is also forming an Artists Network as part of their Arts, Media & Culture Program. This network will connect queer youth designers, writers, poets, performers, filmmakers, playwrights, and artists committed to building a revolutionary movement through cultural expression.

Contact RESYST at www.resyst.org, resyst@resyst.org, 415-305-0945, 3288 21st St., #11, San Francisco, CA 94110. ▼



Volunteer for Teen Voices

Women Express, Inc. is seeking motivated women for volunteer positions in many aspects of publishing their magazines *Teen Voices* and *Teen Voices Online*. They are also looking for women to serve as mentors in their new Sister to Sister program, and programmers and computer specialist for paid positions. Call 617-426-5505 or check out www.teenvoices.com.

La Red The Network para Lesbianas y Mujeres Bisexuales Maltratadas for Battered Lesbians and Bisexual Women

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Grupo de Apoyo
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Queer Youth Online Resources

www.elight.org

ELIGHT is an online community for GLBT youth and young adults. It is a safe forum for youth to speak out, to share, and to find others like themselves. ELIGHT takes submissions from youth from around the world including coming out stories, poetry, rants and raves, features, and others.

www.oasismag.com

Oasis Magazine is an online publication for GLBT and questioning youth that has feature columns by youth from across the country, profiles of out youth, news and events, and fiction and poetry.

www.glsen.org

The national Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) has a site with a lot of news coverage, especially focusing on education and school issues. Connect to state chapters and a student pride section highlighting student activism.

www.youthresource.com

Youth Resource has a great bi youth section with quotes by bi teens and wonderful resource links. Also features a section for youth of color with various cultural/racial categories.

Book Reviews:

Tea by Stacey D'Erasmus,
Algonquin
Books of Chapel Hill, 2000.

Girl Walking Backwards, by Bett
Williams, St. Martin's, 1998.

Reviewed by Ellyn Ruthstrom

Two books centering on young female protagonists who identify as either bisexual or lesbian at a young age are worth noting in this issue. In *Tea*, by Stacey D'Erasmus, we meet Isabel Gold, a young Jewish woman from suburban Philadelphia, at three separate parts of her life: Morning (age eight), Afternoon (age sixteen), and Evening (early twenties). (A slightly dramatic use of the day, however, seeing that Isabel is so young.) And Bett Williams's *Girl Walking Backwards* is set in a modern California teenage world of raves, drugs, and fractured families. Two very different works, but satisfying in their own way.

As *Tea* begins, we see the young Isabel's life as it is shaped by the presence of her mother before she commits suicide at some point just after the Morning section. Her mother is suffering from depression and spends most of her day either in bed or sipping cold tea and smoking while "resting" in front of the television. Isabel describes her mother as, "a woman so hungry she couldn't eat, so tired she couldn't sleep, so lonely she couldn't speak." Thoughts of her mother reappear in the later sections, especially in Evening, when she returns to her home and sorts through boxes of her mother's mementos.

In the Afternoon section, Isabel begins to find her own interests and desires. She has a very strong friendship with Lottie, (even shares some kisses with her) but Lottie has the upper hand in the relationship. "Lottie was the rule giver. Isabel was attentive." However, when Isabel first joins a community theater group, Lottie is threatened and eventually rejects Isabel. In the theater company, Isabel finds out that the director, Augie, is bisexual. At some point, she confides to another group member, Rebecca, that she is also "both" and later they make out at a cast party.

Isabel has moved to New York City with her girlfriend, Thea, in the Evening section. They are budding filmmakers, but Isabel has a day job that keeps her from concentrating on their project as much as Thea is demanding. A third woman, Cricket, worms her way into the process and

affects the relationship between the couple. Just as the film is reaching a crucial time, Isabel needs to go home for Hanukkah with her family, and finds things changed when she returns.

This is a beautifully written book. The characters are clearly drawn, the dialogue feels real, and Isabel's relationships with both men and woman are dealt with very matter-of-factly. I've seen the character being described of as a lesbian, but I don't recall Isabel defining herself that way. She has an encounter with an old boyfriend of Lottie's in the last section that doesn't indicate to me that she is turned off to men so I'd say her sexual label is not as important to her as her quest for a deeper understanding of her memories, her desires, and her future.

Girl Walking Backwards again offers us a young bisexual woman, Skye, as the central character, and again her mother is suffering from severe depression and eventually acute mental illness and a suicide attempt. Skye has done a fair amount of the parenting of her mother after her parents' divorce, her mother's repeated breakdowns, and then the New Age cures her mother turns to for comfort. Her father is a two-bit Hollywood director who has non-existent parenting skills and no interest in Skye's life. So, Skye turns to her boyfriend and other friends she meets along the way at various raves, coffee-houses, and parties to fill the huge gaps in her life.

Skye's first-person narrative has an interesting mix of lethargy, urgency, and intelligence that I can only guess suits the southern California teenage experience she describes. She shares her view of the world in profound and succinct statements, such as, "Parents need to be protected from the truth of their children's lives." And her unusual relationship with her boyfriend allows her to share her various fantasies of the perfect woman she wants to meet while they masturbate in front of one another.

This book made me feel old; my own teen life was so completely different in terms of sexuality and drugs and sense of community. Williams spares nothing in her depictions of some rather tragic experiences for the people that Skye spends time with. But I guess what remains a constant about teen years is that there are hormones, risky behavior, and an unbridled desire to live beyond parental and institutional control. And, amazingly, there seems to be a happy ending, of sorts. Does she get the girl? ▽

♦ 28 % of all queer youth drop out of high school – usually due to harassment, violence, and alienation they experience at school.

♦ 26% of queer youth are forced to leave home because of conflicts with their families over their sexual identities.

♦ Queer youth are four times more likely than heterosexual students to commit suicide.

Blessed Bi Spirit: Bisexual People of Faith, edited by Debra R. Kolodny. The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2000.

Reviewed by Genia Sullivan

As a bisexual woman of faith, I was eager to read a compilation of thirty-plus bisexual people, mostly women, share their experiences of bisexuality and spirituality. The book of almost three hundred pages covers a diverse range of religions and writing styles: a poem about love making, a paper documenting the inclusion of bisexuals in the policy and politics of the Presbyterian church, and many short autobiographical sketches of the development of sexuality and spirituality of people from all denominations. The authors are Protestant, Jewish, Wiccan, Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic, Unitarian, Native American, Episcopalian, and some, just generally spiritual.

The pieces vary enormously, both in information and capacity to hold my attention. However, there was one common theme that all the authors repeat in separate ways: bisexuality has a unique capacity to enhance spirituality. Regardless of the author, several words arise over and over again: ambiguity, chaos, paradox, gatekeeper, faith, and acceptance. Each author finds a strengthened ability to live in the gray area of the spiritual/physical world when s/he comes to terms with living in the gray area of bisexuality. The authors all echo the sentiment that both sexuality and spirituality demands a certain release of control over having an either/or, black/white world.

I think this book is a must-have for any person who identifies strongly with their spirituality and sexuality. All of the writings are well done and the styles vary enough for all types of readers. The editor clearly had a strong vision for the book, and the care and effort that went into putting it together is evident. It was an honor to read. ▼

Holiday Play Bake-Off!

Theater Offensive is sponsoring a playwriting workshop with Daniel Alexander Jones on Sunday, December 17, 10:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. at M.I.T.'s Kresge Little Theater (small domed building behind student activity center on Mass. Ave.) where attendees will create a play in one day. Bring writing utensils, enthusiasm, and unbridled creativity. Daniel Alexander Jones, Artist-in-Residence 2000 at The Theater Offensive, is an interdisciplinary theater artist currently working on his new piece, "Bel Canto." Fusing fragments of mythology, language, and character, Daniel's writing and performance work gives voice to uniquely American perspectives on contemporary themes. The workshop is free, but you must pre-register by calling 617-542-4214 by December 10. For further details, contact: The Theater Offensive at 539 Tremont St., #408, Boston, MA 02116, 617-542-4214, offensiv@tiac.net, www.thetheateroffensive.org.

Poetry

By an anonymous college junior

I have moved past
holding my lover's hand
in public to
a space where I am
afraid to hold her hand
in public
it fills me
it fills me with sickness
of myself
the disease of your
fear fills me with fear

I have moved out of naivete
and cried at the loss
for you have polluted
her hand to me
I know how your fear
feels in my body
in her hand
in my space
and I will move past this too

They Ain't Tits
By Virginia Stone

Her heaving bosoms rise and fall
in mountainous rapture - her tempestuous storm
of boiling waves and heavy tides
rushing and flowing, swell and ebb
her engulfing scent of more

her aura, like a claustrophobic weight
trapped, paralyzed with desire and focus
engulfed in her feel
of wanting more

magnetically pulling me close-up
zoom shot of endless breastness
sweet honey, mother of god
your fullness drowns me

(c) 2000 by Virginia Stone.

Boston Bis Get Around... Pass It On

The office of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, the Bisexual Resource Center, Biversity and the other offshoot bisexual groups that coexist happily at the Boston Living Center has been moved to a much larger space. We are still on the Fourth Floor of 29 Stanhope Street, but we now have two rooms that will soon be shaped into an exceptional place for folks to gather and do even more for the greater bi community.

Along with that change, the Bisexual Resource Center is changing its mailing address to: P.O. Box 1026, Boston, MA 02117-1026. The phone number for the center will remain 617-424-9595. *BBWN will keep its Cambridge P.O. Box.*

There is still no paid staff in the office yet (maybe 2001), but every Thursday there is a volunteer night to help do some basic tasks, so please feel free to drop in and lend a hand. Volunteering is 7-9 p.m.



A few members of the Bi Rap contingent at the CBD celebration on September 23, many who volunteered their time to help make the event a success. Photo by [redacted]

CBD from page 3

The event also prompted a *Boston Globe* article that drew some attention to the Bi Ball and also to the reality that Boston is a thriving hub of bisexual community and activism. Robyn Ochs, one of the founders of BBWN, was one of the people featured in the article. Community members in both same-sex and mixed-sex relationships were included and the *Globe* also noted the biphobia that the bi community often experiences from the queer

world. Most notably, there was an acknowledgement by *Bay Windows* editor Jeff Epperly that the lack of bi content in his publication was due to "a little bit of ignorance on my part." Thank you, Jeff, for the confession. Four Hail Marys and assume the position.

I think CBD, as we affectionately call September 23, is here to stay. It is a great opportunity to get out and celebrate our lives, loves, and community. See you next year. ▼

Groundbreaking Transgender Ruling in Connecticut

The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities ruled in early November that the state laws prohibiting sex discrimination include transgender people within those protections. Jennifer Levi, staff attorney for Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) drafted a brief in support of the request that was filed by a coalition of supporters including GLAD, the Connecticut Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Civil Rights, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, Human Rights Campaign, National Center for Lesbian Rights, Female-to-Male International, and Gender Public Advocacy Coalition.

Levi commented, "This is a very important decision for transgender people who have historically been excluded from many civil rights protections. The Commission's ruling takes note of the still pervasive discrimination that many people face simply because they do not meet society's stereotype of what people think a 'real woman' or a 'real man' should look like. This decision affirms the recent trend

correcting the historical error of excluding transgender people from our laws."

The ruling clarifies that transsexual people may bring claims of sex discrimination and defines transsexual people to include a broad range of individuals who do not conform to gender stereotypes regardless of whether or not they have or intend to have surgery. The ruling also includes intersexed people, for example, people who are born with ambiguous genitalia or chromosomal ambiguity found in persons with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, Klinefelter's Syndrome, and Turner's Syndrome. (GLAD press release) ▼

- ◆ 69% of queer youth have been verbally, physically, or sexually harassed at school.
- ◆ Queer youth are up to four times more likely than their peers to report skipping school because of feeling unsafe.
- ◆ Queer youth are four times more likely to be threatened with a weapon at school.

CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

Dyke Night New Year's Eve Fantasia Ball, 9 p.m. - 2 a.m. Fantasy costume is encouraged, performance at 9 p.m., complementary champagne toast at midnight, hors d'oeuvres and a cake to celebrate the 100th Dyke Night at the Midway Cafe in Jamaica Plain. Tickets are \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door.



January 2 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call for topic, 617-354-8807. See December 5th.

January 3 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See December 6th.

January 10 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. See December 13th.

January 11 ♦ Thursday

BBWN Introductory Meeting, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Learn about BBWN and what resources there are for bis in the Boston area. Cambridge Women's Center, 26 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 617-354-8807.

January 12-15 ♦ Friday-Monday

BiCon 2001: The Sacred and the Queer in St. Petersburg, FL. See page 7 for details.

January 15 ♦ Monday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Creativity." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140 or e-mail to nellythrustmor@aol.com.

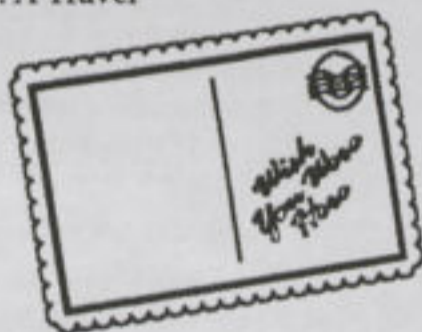
January 16 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call for topic, 617-354-8807. See December 5th.

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See December 6th.

January 20 ♦ Saturday

BBWN Brunch, Noon - 3 p.m. at Amy's near Davis Square in Somerville. A Travel Stories Brunch, Amy asks that people bring along vacation photos or travel ideas to share with the group. Call 617-628-8735 for directions.



Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Brunch will return to Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square in Somerville. Always a favorite. The Davis Square T stop on the Red Line is just across the street. The Biversity Planning Meeting will be at the restaurant following the brunch.

January 19 - 21 ♦ Friday-Sunday

January Playfest Weekend, a Women's Weekend in

COME VISIT BBWN

ONLINE AT:

biresource.org/bbwn

Learn about BBWN, read snippets of the newsletter, and find links to many different bi resources.

Western Massachusetts. A weekend for women at the Charlemont Inn, about two hours drive from Boston. Sponsored by several local women's social organizations. For more info call 617-666-3347 or leave your name and number at 617-666-1922.

January 26 ♦ Friday

Bi Coffee, 7:00 p.m. Enjoy delicious coffee drinks and great company at the Diesel Cafe, 257 Elm Street in Davis Square in Somerville. On the Red Line.

January 28 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Choose from a variety of Asian food at Ma Soba. Corner of Dunster and Mt. Auburn Streets in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Nearest T is Harvard Square on the Red Line.

January 30 ♦ Tuesday

BiWomen mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office at 29 Stanhope St. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Join us. Socialize during and after.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

4th Sundays: Bi People of Color Potluck. NOTE: The PoC Potluck is on hiatus for December and January.

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Thursdays: Dyke Night at the Midway Cafe, 3496 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain.

Saturdays: Lava Bar in Kenmore Square, 575 Commonwealth Ave. at the Howard Johnson's.

BiWomen wants you!!!



SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for *BiWomen*
(sliding scale)

___ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)

___ \$20-\$30 (suggested)

___ \$30-\$100 Extra Special Donor

___ Renewal

___ New Subscriber

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE (Optional) _____

BBWN, P.O. BOX 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd

Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Tuesdays:

NEW! Married Bi Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: 617-354-8807.

1st & 3rd

Thursdays:

Bi Women's Resource & Support Group, 7 p.m. at the Women's Health Consortium, 29 Vaughan Mall, Portsmouth, NH. For info call 603-431-1669 or contact Sue Corcoran at schmoo@nh.ultranet.com.

CALENDAR

December 2 ♦ Saturday

BRC House Party fundraiser at the home of Roland and Carol Glenn in the South End, 3-6 p.m. (See page 3 sidebar for details.) This is an excellent opportunity to meet other folks in the community and make your tax-deductible end-of-year donation to the BRC. Contact Buzz at buzz_harris@yahoo.com or Alan at alan@spdcc.com to RSVP or for directions.

Michelle Malone at the Lizard Lounge, 9 p.m. Touring with her new CD, *Authorized Bootleg*. 1667 Mass Ave, Cambridge. Call 617-547-0759 for details.

December 3 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Potluck Brunch, noon - 3 p.m. at Robyn's in Jamaica Plain, near the Forest Hill T stop on the Orange Line. Come with a dish and relax with a group of bi women. Great way to get to know other BBWN members. Call or e-mail Robyn for directions, 617-495-8476, ochs@bi.org.

December 5 ♦ Tuesday

BBWN Volunteer Serving at the Boston Living Center Ladies Night, 5:30 p.m. Help serve the women clients at the Living Center's Ladies Night Dinner in the second floor cafeteria. Eat dinner either before or after you serve. Call Ellyn to volunteer, 617-623-5535. 29 Stanhope St., Boston. Nearest T is the Back Bay Orange Line Station.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Casual vs. Committed Sex?" Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

December 6 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

December 7 ♦ Thursday

The Challenges Facing Transgendered and Gender-Free Teens, 7:30 p.m. Open discussion led by Grace Sterling Stowell, Executive Director of BAGLY and hosted by The Freedom from Gender Society. At MIT, 160 Memorial Dr, Rm 14N-325, Cambridge. Free. Info: FGSociety@aol.com.

December 8 ♦ Friday

YES! Benefit for The Network for Battered Lesbian and Bisexual Women, 6-11 p.m. Harriet Tubman House, 566 Columbus Ave., Boston. \$8-\$20 all ages, sliding scale. This is the Second Annual ToolBox Production Tribute to the Power of Women! Your hosts: Karen "MAL" Malmie and biracial bisexual performance poet Amatul Hannan. Robin White debuts "REMEDY," her powerful and moving original story of one lesbian's struggle with domestic violence; high femme drag from The Princesses of Porn; slam poet Jaclyn Friedman; Gendercrash transgender poet Stacey Montgomery; and readings by "Philogyny: Girls who Kiss and Tell" editors Amie M. Evans and Jean Powers. Call ToolBox Productions 617-497-9215 X1 for more info. Or visit www.djdee.com/toolbox/. Cosponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center.

December 8 ♦ Friday

True Colors Performance Slam, 7-9:30 p.m. at Spontaneous Celebrations in Jamaica Plain (45 Danforth Street, near the Stony Brook Orange Line T stop). See page 4 for details.

December 12 ♦ Tuesday

Married Bi Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. First meeting of a new group that plans to meet monthly. Call 617-354-8807 for directions.

December 13 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. All bi community members welcome to attend. This meeting will include election of board members for 2001. The meeting is at 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

December 14-16 ♦ Thursday-Saturday

The Theater Offensive's Plays at Work at MIT's Kresge Little Theater, 8 p.m. **December 14 & 16:** *Queer Theory! A Musical Travesty* that musically satirizes academic queer theory. **December 15:** Concert reading of *Bel Canto* about a young man's struggle between the magical world of opera and the jazz-like reality around him. \$5 general admission. Call 617-542-4214 for more details.

December 16 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Brunch at Thornton's, 100 Peterborough St. in Boston's Fenway area. T stop is Fenway on the D branch of the Green Line.

December 19 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See December 6th.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "I'll Be Bi for the Holidays" See December 5th.

December 31 ♦ Sunday

Biversity First Night, 7 p.m. We will begin the New Year's Eve celebration with vegetarian food at Buddha's Delight in Chinatown. From there, the group will decide what festivities to partake in. Buddha's Delight is now upstairs on Beach St. between Harrison and Washington. Nearest T stop is Chinatown on the Orange Line.

New Year's Eve Dance for Women, 8 p.m. - 1 a.m. DJ Dee presents her New Year's dance at the Sons of Italy Ballroom in Winchester. Buy \$20 tickets before December 20, limited amount of \$25 tix at door. Dancing, finger food, and a champagne toast. Line dance lesson at 8:30, DJ at 9:00. Send checks made out to Dee Greenberg to: Fever Dance Productions, 993 Mass Ave., #213, Arlington, MA 02476.



CALENDAR continues on page 11

BI WOMEN SURVEY: THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

BiWomen and the Boston Bisexual Women's Network would like to know about what you like and don't like about the newsletter and the organization in order to better serve its readers and members. Part 1 of this survey deals with these issues; Part 2 of the survey includes questions that were asked on reader surveys in the past (going back to 1984) and we are interested in seeing if there are changes in the responses over time. We would like your input and hope that you will take a few minutes of your time to fill out this survey and send it back to us by January 15th, 2001. Send to: BBWN, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140.

Part 1

- 1) Do you subscribe to *BiWomen*? ____yes ____no
If you answered "yes," for how long? ____
If you answered "no," where did you obtain this copy? ____
- 2) a) Will you renew your subscription? ____yes ____no
b) Why or why not? ____
- 3) How often do you read *BiWomen*? ____ first time I've ever read it ____ every issue
____ whenever I pick up a copy other: ____
- 4) If you used to subscribe, why did you decide not to renew? ____
- 5) What do you like about *BiWomen*? ____

- 6) When you read *BiWomen*, what type(s) of articles do you read most often?
- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------|
| ____ movie reviews | ____ news bits | ____ browser beat | ____ poetry |
| ____ book reviews | ____ BBWN info | ____ editor's notes | |
| ____ theme articles | ____ sidebars | ____ calendar | |
- 7) Which of our last six issues (including this one) did you read?
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ____ Bi Youth | ____ Bi Space: The Politics Issue |
| ____ Bicultural, Biracial, Bisexual | ____ Femme/Butch |
| ____ Body Image | ____ Bi Women Write About Men |
- 8) If you have read more than one of them, which one was your favorite? ____
- 9) Name one item you would change about *BiWomen*. ____
- 10) If you could write a feature article of your own for *BiWomen*, what would it be about?

11) What themes would you like to see *BiWomen* explore? _____

12) Are you close enough to the Boston area to participate in BBWN activities? ____ yes ____ no

13) Have you ever attended a BBWN brunch at a member's home? ____ yes ____ no

14) Have you ever attended a *BiWomen* newsletter stuffing? ____ yes ____ no

15) If you are able to, what types of activities would you be interested in participating in or help organize?

Participate

Organize

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Club/dance nights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Movie or theater outings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Outdoor activities (hiking, camping, beach days, bike trips) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Weekends in Provincetown (or other places) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Brunches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Political events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Coming Out groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Support/Rap groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Book discussions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pride activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Newsletter stuffing |

Part 2

16) Do you consider yourself bisexual? ____ yes ____ no ____ unsure

Why? _____

17) Do you consider yourself a lesbian? ____ yes ____ no ____ unsure

Why? _____

18) Do you consider yourself straight? ____ yes ____ no ____ unsure

Why? _____

19) Do you consider yourself trans? ____ yes ____ no ____ unsure

Why? _____

20) a) How would you describe your sexual preference? (circle one)

Hetero- sexual	Mostly Hetero	More Hetero Than Homo	Equally Both	More Homo Than Hetero	Mostly Homo	Homo- sexual
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20) b) How would you describe your current "lifestyle"? (circle one)

Hetero- sexual	Mostly Hetero	More Hetero Than Homo	Equally Both	More Homo Than Hetero	Mostly Homo	Homo- sexual
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21) What sequence of identities did you go through in coming to identify yourself as bisexual?

- ☐ Lesbian, then bisexual
- ☐ Lesbian, then heterosexual, then bisexual
- ☐ Heterosexual, then bisexual
- ☐ Heterosexual, then lesbian, then bisexual
- ☐ Heterosexual, then bisexual, then lesbian
- ☐ Heterosexual, then bisexual, then lesbian, then bisexual
- ☐ Always bisexual
- ☐ Other:

22) Are you currently in an ongoing relationship?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with a man | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with a woman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with both a man and a woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with more than one man |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with more than one woman | <input type="checkbox"/> No, but want to be |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No, not sure whether I want to be | <input type="checkbox"/> No, don't want to be |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with more than two people | |

23) Are you currently in a monogamous (closed) relationship?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with a man | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with a woman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with both a man and a woman | <input type="checkbox"/> No, but want to be |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No, not sure whether I want to be | <input type="checkbox"/> No, don't want to be |

24) Do you hope to be in a long-term primary relationship?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, monogamously | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, nonmonogamously |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, either way | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, with more than one person | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

25) If you were in a long-term primary relationship, who would you want to be in such a relationship with?

- | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A man | <input type="checkbox"/> A woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Probably a man | <input type="checkbox"/> Probably a woman | <input type="checkbox"/> No preference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Both a man and a woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure | | | |

26) Do you want to have children someday? (circle one)

Yes No Probably Probably not Unsure Already have children

27) Do you want to be in a long-term committed relationship before having children? (circle one)

Yes No Probably Probably not Unsure Not applicable (don't want or already have)

28) If so, who would you want this relationship to be with? (circle one)

A man A woman Probably a man Probably a woman No preference Unsure Not Applicable

29) In the last two years, have you attended meetings or been actively involved in any gay/lesbian/bi/trans organizations? ☐ yes ☐ no

If so, which ones? _____

If not, why not? _____

30) In the last two years, have you donated money to any gay/lesbian/bi/trans organizations? ☐ yes ☐ no

31) How old are you? _____ 32) What state do you live in (or country if not U.S)? _____

33) What type of area do you live in? ☐ urban ☐ rural ☐ suburban

34) Are you married? ☐ to a woman ☐ to a man ☐ no

35) Number of children _____

36) Do you consider yourself a feminist? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ unsure

37) Are you registered to vote in the U.S.? ☐ yes, Democrat ☐ yes, Republican ☐ yes, Independent
☐ no ☐ no, not a U.S. citizen ☐ yes, other party

38) Your racial/ethnicity identity: ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander ☐ African American/Black
☐ Latina, Hispanic ☐ European American/White
☐ Native American or Alaskan Native
☐ Biracial, Multiracial
_____ (fill in your own)

39) How would you describe your politics? (circle one number)

Radical		Liberal		Conservative		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

40) Family religion: (if any) _____ 41) Your religion: (if any) _____

42) Occupation: _____

43) Highest Level of Education: ☐ some high school ☐ high school diploma ☐ trade school
☐ some college ☐ college degree ☐ some graduate study ☐ grad/professional degree
☐ doctorate

Please let us know if you have other concerns about the newsletter or BBWN. _____

